

#264 Kingdom: The Shadow and the Reality

Recently some friends that we have known for over 34 years visited my wife and I. They were both raised in Bible believing churches with Pentecostal roots. They were so excited because they learned that they were keeping Sabbath on the wrong day and in the wrong way. They described their Sabbath day routine. We cook all our food the day before and attend Messianic services on Friday evening. We sleep in on Saturday, eat a prepared breakfast and then read or rest and take a short walk. At sundown we do other regular things. They feel so much better and are ready to start the week in peace. They also explained that it was Constantine in about the year 330 that changed the Sabbath day to Sunday to accommodate some heathen practices. They feel the Presence of God now in their home and activities. All this appears so serene and right. They feel that the regular churches have departed from the plan of God and have mis-interpreted the scriptures.

We might ask if there is any thing wrong with any of this? This is probably a better way of honoring God than playing golf or going to a ball game or watching Television. It is surely more peaceful than any sports activity and probably more beneficial to the body and soul than our normal activities. It may also be much more beneficial to the body to eat certain foods and abstain from other foods. So what is wrong with living in this way? Nothing!

Still if we know the scriptures we discover that these things are just types and shadows of the real things that deal with the New Covenant of God. We may keep all the letter of the scripture and miss the spirit of the scripture. If the letter kills and the spirit gives life then the choice is clear. The fact is that many of the practices that have been adopted by the visible church also kill. We don't worry about these but condemn those who try to keep parts of the Law.

Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. [9] For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, [10] and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; [11] and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; [12] having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. [13] And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, [14] having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

COL 2:16 Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- [17] things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. [18] Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, [19] and **not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied** and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

COL 2:20 If you have **died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world**, why, as if you were living in the world, do you **submit yourself to decrees**, such as, [21] “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” [22] (which all refer **to things destined to perish** with the using)--in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? [23] These are matters which have, to be sure, the **appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.**

There is so much useless garbage in the “self-made religions” and the man centered gospel that just promote fleshly indulgences in the rules, traditions and teachings of men. None of these things are of eternal benefit but have the appearance of something good. For example if we have been circumcised outward in the flesh but have had no circumcision of the heart and still walk in the flesh, of what eternal value is that? Even if it appears as harmless and good it can easily lead us into deception. That is not just by following certain laws we see in scripture but by any of the traditions and religion of men.

In this next restoration we may have to depart from things that are universally believed and accepted today by orthodox and Bible believing churches. Many things today that we assume are of faith may just be the traditions and teachings of men. Adhering to some doctrine of “universal faith” may not be personal faith at all but just a tradition of men. Too many of our “concepts of Christian foundations” may have produced no actual and experiential foundation at all.

As Restoration believers we believe and support the teaching that we have received power

when the Holy Spirit came upon us. We believe that, even if we have received no personal power that can be demonstrated. We believe there is a “river of life” flowing within us even though there is no manifestation of water at all. We may believe that since we have accepted Jesus as our personal servant that we are citizens of the Kingdom. However, in reality we are still far from the Kingdom government of God within us. We may firmly believe that casting out demons is a demonstration of the Kingdom but we have never cast out a demon. We confirm that miracles are definitely for today and insist that is our faith but we have never done a miracle.

Somehow we think that if we believe something is true and scriptural that is all that is required. “I believe, help my unbelief” is accepted as the normal Christian life.

James 2: 17] Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. [18] But someone may well say, “You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” [19] **You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.** [20] But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless

Faith without any manifestation in our life [works] is useless. We believe hundreds of things that are written in scripture but can manifest none of them. We excuse ourselves by saying “well that is the responsibility of another member of the body. I am just called to be a hidden member with no manifestation!”

When the manifestation of the sons of God becomes visible we will know the difference between those who believe something is possible and the actual demonstration of these things as the works of faith.

However, when we understand these things and then “make a decision” to participate in ALL that God has for us we discover another truth. Everything begins with God and His Sovereignty and He chooses who He wills and acts according to His eternal purpose. Therefore, God is in control of everything and has already decided the end from the beginning. Then what is our responsibility toward God’s eternal purpose, His Kingdom and His priesthood?

2 Peter 1: 8] For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] **For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. [10] Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; [11] for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.**

His calling AND His choosing is wholly out of His sovereignty. God initiates and calls and man’s responsibility is to submit, surrender and make certain that God’s will is done. When we examine each one who has been called and chosen by God over the centuries it is very clear that no one volunteered for some position and was chosen because of their zeal.

Noah was selected by God, called and chosen. Moses was not a volunteer leader. Aaron was not a volunteer priest. He was chosen by God. Gideon, David, Jeremiah, Paul, Peter, the apostles and even Jesus were all chosen by God and didn’t volunteer. They were not selected because of their initiative but because of God’s sovereign choice.

We cannot emphasize that eternal principle too much. Romans 9 makes it clear that God chooses who He wants and it is not a matter of man volunteering his services. The nation of Israel didn’t choose God but God choose them. Abraham didn’t choose to be the father of nations but God choose him. Even if it seems like Cornelius chose God first it is clear that God initiates and draws and inspires first and no one can come unless the Father first chooses and draws.

Heb 5:1 For every high priest taken from among men **is appointed** on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; [2] he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; [3] and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. [4] **And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was. [5] So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest,** but He who said to Him, “THOU ART MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE”; HEB 5:6 just as He says also in another passage, “**THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.**”

Neither Aaron nor Jesus volunteered for the position of “priest” but was chosen and appointed by

God. God had sworn and would not change His mind that His Son would be the High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. God had already decided in all eternity past that His Eternal High Priest would be taken from among men so that Priest could deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, the weak and messed up men. Because of God's sovereign choice, even though Jesus was God's Son He had to learn obedience by the things that He suffered and remain faithful. Part of Jesus' faithfulness was not initiating anything but waiting until He saw the Father working or until He heard the Father say something.

In this next restoration this will be the most difficult discipline for those who participate to learn and to submit. Obviously, until there is a total surrender and full consecration there will be those who "make a decision and forge ahead" into disaster. It is one thing to "press into the Kingdom" and another to press into the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. We need to recognize the difference between "our choosing to press" and our being chosen and called of God. We have all been called into His Kingdom government but He will sovereignly choose His servants. We have all been purchased off the auction block by the blood of Jesus and are slaves of God but He knows who are His and He chooses whom He wills to be His king / priests.

For that reason we must be very careful about His calling and choosing us. Trying to convince the multitudes to volunteer to be a kingdom of priests would be ignorant. This is not a matter of us "making a decision" but of God's sovereign choice. However, until we totally surrender to God in full consecration and submission there is no possibility of being chosen even though God may have called us from all eternity past. It is really because of God's choice that we have this burning desire to consecrate our lives to do His will regardless of what that is. Because we have that desire we know that God is drawing us.

We don't know how long God had been drawing Paul until He knocked him off his horse but Paul understood very clearly that he had been chosen. Paul was not a volunteer but was drafted by God to be an apostle.

Acts 26:16] `But arise, and stand on your feet; **for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; [17] delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, [18] to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.**'

We must qualify and be counted worthy of the Kingdom but we must be called and chosen to be a priest / king by God out of His sovereign choice. Then we must be found faithful

Heb 2:17] Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, **that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God**, to make propitiation for the sins of the people---

In the next restoration, which we anticipate will be the Holy Place Life and ministry, everything will be different. Those things that we have accepted as normal in the past will be very dangerous

in the future. The casual way that we served the Lord in the Outer Court will be rejected in the Holy Place. In the Outer Court we served God as it seemed good to us and according to our own will and way. We initiated work according to the crisis of the moment. We responded to necessity rather than to the will and direction of God. We tried to do some of the things we saw in scripture rather than what we saw the Father doing. In the Outer Court ministry we had no idea what the Father was doing so we did the best we could.

In Leviticus 10 Nadab and Abihu may have been doing the best they could but in the Holy Place ministry that was very dangerous. LEV 10:1 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. [2] And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. [3] Then Moses said to Aaron, **“It is what the LORD spoke, saying, “By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.”**

Casual ministry in the Holy Place will dishonor God and casual ministry to the people by the “priesthood” will not be acceptable. Recognizing the holiness of God will be essential for those who enter in to minister to the Lord. For that reason the preparation of the priests after the order of Melchizedek must be very carefully completed and casual volunteers should take warning.

The transition from believer to priest / king will not be quick or easy and carries a lot of risk. Therefore, don't resist God's calling and choosing you but don't volunteer for something you were not chosen for.