

#296 Kingdom: The Inward Church

Most every time we mention the “church” our mind goes to the “outward church” and that which we perceive with our natural eyes and our hands have handled. We have “touched” a certain experience or a certain life or we may have just touched something comatose, cold, lacking real life. My thesis here is that this is NOT the church that He is building. The “outward church” is the manifestation of the “inward church.” What we see on the outside is just the result of what is really on the inside. For example; Out of the heart the mouth speaks. What comes out is evidence of what is inside.

In the same way we have an “outward sanctuary”, there must first be an “inward sanctuary” before there can be a real and valid “outward sanctuary.” My thought is that the church that He is building begins in the “inner sanctuary.” The extreme shallowness that is evident is not because we don’t have proper “outer sanctuaries” but because of the under-developed “inner sanctuaries.”

All the magnificent outward Cathedrals, edifices, church buildings and meeting places will not survive. Not one stone will be left upon another and wood will not survive the end time problems. Nothing that is ONLY outward will survive when we pass over into eternity. Not even this outward temple we call our body.

I am speculating that all the effort we spend on outward things is lost in the scheme of eternity and only what is built on the inside will have any permanence when we pass over. Therefore, when we speak about the “Reconstruction of the Church” we mean the “Reconstruction of the Inner Man.” 2Chron 29:3 In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. [4] And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them into the square on the east. [5] Then he said to them, **“Listen to me, O Levites. Consecrate yourselves now, and consecrate the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry the uncleanness out from the holy place.** [6] “For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done evil in the sight of the LORD our God, and have forsaken Him and turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD, and have turned their backs. [7] **“They have also shut the doors of the porch and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel.**

2 Chron 29:11] “My sons, do not be negligent now, for the LORD has chosen you to stand before Him, to minister to Him, and to be His ministers and burn incense.”

The “rebuilding of the Temple” and “the city” by Nehemiah and Ezra is a graphic of rebuilding or reconstruction of the “inward sanctuary” and establishing the “New Jerusalem” vision in the church. This picture given here in 2 Chronicles 29-30 & 31 reveals some details of the “re-establishing of the inner life” and carrying the uncleanness out of the Most Holy Place or the “heart of man.” Then cleansing and rebuilding the Holy Place of the mind, will and emotions, the character and attitudes to restore the sanctuary of God. Then restoring the full function of the Holy Place Life and ministry which IS standing before Him, ministering to Him and burning Incense. This precedes the “being sent” to the Outer Court ministries. It is obvious in these chapters that the “consecration of the priests” is primary before anything significant can happen.

My theory is that the whole Tabernacle of Moses is a type, a shadow and a pattern for the “inward church.” In other studies we have shared the preparation of the “outward church” for a Holy Place ministry. Of course the “outward church” is another fantasy if there is not FIRST an “inward church.”

While men are busy building the “outward church,” Jesus is busy building the “inward church.” This confusion between the “outward church and the inward church” may be the source of the frustration we are feeling. If we think that what is visible is the “church that He is building” we may conclude that He needs to reexamine His work.

Our real concern should be personal, inward, spiritual and eternal! IF it is just what He is building that will survive in eternity then our focus must be upon what He is building within us. Are we cooperating with Him or are we resisting the inward change necessary to participate in the next restoration? All the outward study, the learning of doctrines, conferences on gifts, learning how to minister and the various church activities are all irrelevant if there is no real “church Life” within. If our most holy place is full of uncleanness and the lampstand has gone out and the incense altar has no fire and the mind is not renewed, then all this other stuff is just window dressing.

It is obvious that there can be no depth of outward understanding if there is not first a depth of our inward life. When even simple truth is confusing, it is evident that there is a shallow inward life. The point I am making is that Jesus is building the “inward church” and He is the only one who can do that. Still, He can only do that eternal work in the measure we ask Him and cooperate with Him to get the work done.

The shallowness in the “outward church” must be laid at the feet of the “ministries” that has been assigned the task of bringing progressive revelation to the “outward church.” When believers are assured that just being born again is all that is necessary to inherit the Kingdom there is little wonder why there is such a shallow development in the “inner life.”

Since the “heart” is “desperately wicked and full of all kinds of uncleanness” the “inner church” is confronted with big problems from the very first. Most of these things cannot be “cast out” but like we see in 2 Chronicles 29 they must be carried out. We really can’t expect Christ to inhabit a “heart that is desperately wicked.” Still, because of His grace He is willing to come and dung out the temple. Each person has enough personal cleaning up to accomplish to keep him busy without trying to pick up a splinter or carry some trash out of some other person’s holy place. Each day has its own cleaning program and presents its own problems.

The universal criticism of those outside the church seems to be that not only is religion irrelevant, the church is also irrelevant. The perception seems to be that this public display of devotion to God is phony and who cares anyway. Since “church” is a religious charade keep it out of sight! Religious hypocrisy is rejected.

For us to expend energy to guard the irrelevant is a waste of time. The ministries must now spend their energy to make the irrelevant, relevant. But how can we do that and what should be the focus of “ministry” today? More abstract terms and theories and opinions and speculations are too

general to give direction even to the “outward church.”

Then what IS the main concern for the “church” as it stands and relates within, subjectively, and without, objectively, today? My main concern is not widely accepted but it is still a concern even if it is not universal. I will list a few concerns that should be fairly obvious.

(1) That the Church structure that we see today is not geared for the radical change necessary to incorporate the Kingdom of God, His sovereign government or the “priesthood ministry” inherent in and necessary to the administration of the Kingdom.

(2) That the church is not equipped to hold within itself and demonstrate the character and Life of Jesus Christ and to exhibit and explain the meaning and purpose of the Kingdom of God IN the Christian Life.

(3) That the visible church is not equipped or have the moral power to suffer what is necessary to extend the Gospel of the Kingdom to the whole world and turn the various crises, sufferings and testings into a higher Life.

(4) That the lack of Christian ability that is demonstrated in the Romans 7 experience prevents us from demonstrating our inner desires to serve God and to overcome the urges to become “great in the eyes of men.”

(5) The concern that the bulk of the church does not utilize the capacity, the power or the provision of the Holy Spirit to change us, to train us, to teach us, to equip us, to discipline us and to develop us so we can fulfill God’s purpose and bring joy to His heart.

(6) The concern to raise up a new generation of leadership [plural] that has a new vision and the revelation to make the next restoration happen under God’s voice and government.

(7) To develop within each believer the revelation of God’s eternal purpose. To root up and destroy our human desire for greatness but then to gain the glory to demonstrate the greatness of God.

(8) A concern for the “corporate church” to actually become “the corporate leaven of the Kingdom” within society and to be the corporate salt and corporate light to the world.

(9) For the “mature church” to manifest and demonstrate the actions, the teachings, the character and attitudes of Jesus Christ in outward ministry. To demonstrate the ministry of Life.

(10) For the church to demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is designed to “unify all of humanity” under one supreme, sovereign and divine Person— The Eternal King. All this division must be destroyed by each assembly unifying around one God and His Eternal Government.

(11) For the church to achieve “greatness” through serving others as they would serve Christ.

{Do it to the least of these] rather than achieving the greatness of ego and personal name and fame. A refocus of “Kingdom values” becoming “Family values.”

(12) For the church to “cleanse away the greatness of man and ministry” in order that the greatness of God can be manifest through the greater works. “Great men in the pulpit” is an anomaly in the Kingdom.

(13) For the church to “cleanse away” the distinctions created by men and the illusion of church unity when all kinds of racial, cultural, economic, religious, sexual and ecclesiastical divisions and distinctions plainly exist.

(14) For the ministries to bring the revelation that our “temple” is only holy after it is consecrated and set apart 100% for God’s use and for His habitation . We are “justified by faith” but we are made holy by God’s Manifest Presence.

(15) For the church to overcome the condemnation of living in Romans 7 by ascending to the Romans 8 experience rather than by insisting on the doctrine of “there is therefore, no condemnation.” Those of us who walk in the flesh need to experience the condemnation.

(16) For the church to replace “the ministry and the mentality of universal escapism” with the “ministry and mentality of preparation, sanctification, spiritual growth, personal responsibility and perfection.”

(17) To cleanse the church from rituals, programs, religious demands, ceremonies, and systems of worship that have nothing to do with God but just provide something for man to do so man can feel justified.

(18) For the church to receive the revelation that “every member involvement in the irrelevant” is irrelevant.

(19) That the church’s first “call” is to belong wholly to Jesus Christ and not to some ministry. “Loose cannon” ministries belong wholly to themselves and their purpose is to serve themselves and to develop their “egos” through ministry.

(20) That the church develop in discernment to be able to recognize when we are deceived into assuming that “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” when from God’s viewpoint we do not know that we are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked! It will require some maturity of character to understand that we are not yet where we ought to be in this time period. Many are naked before God and don’t know it.

(21) The concern is that the whole church recognize when it is bankrupt and has nothing of its own that can be used to build the City of God.. A concern that there is not enough wisdom to buy eye salve to anoint our eyes, that we may see.

If we add all this up we could pray for the understanding not to “create another plan” for the

“reconstruction of the church” after a pattern that seems good to us. We don’t need another “Romans 7 plan” that must result in the “oh, wretched man that I am” syndrome.

It is NOT that God has left us with an inner inadequacy but that He has replaced our inner inadequacy with Himself Who IS our inner adequacy. Our answer to the “old inadequate life” is a new “more abundant Life” that is instantly available in Christ.

The revelation is this; Jesus Christ doesn’t have to do one more thing or provide one more thing to make all these things experiential. Everything has been provided through Calvary and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Still, these 21 things is just another attempt by man to repair something that possibly no one thinks is broken. However, it is obvious that there is nearly a universal acceptance by society that the values presented by God as normal are outdated and irrelevant. Why is that possible? Because we are not demonstrating what we are proclaiming.

My thought is that if the church was living in this reality and the values of the Kingdom someone might recognize that reality as relevant to the society today. The “theory of Christianity” impresses very few. It should not be a shock that in a secular society everything must be secular to be normal. The real church is an aberration in a secular society.

To try to move the church into more of a secular voice in order to be accepted by the secular society is an anti-Kingdom approach to evangelism. Since the Kingdom is what it is and can be nothing else it must be presented as it is. That is a radical departure from anything that can be accepted by a secular society and still remain secular.

When secular humanism entered into the pulpit, the Kingdom was lost to a generation or more. Secular humanism has designed a new gospel that can accept a secular society without it being converted. These church goers could be called “secular saints” that assemble in a “secular congregation” to acknowledge a “secular Christ” that will take them to a “secular heaven.”

We would all welcome a revolt in the “secular churches” against the humanistic gospel but are we really fervently seeking after divine Truth and Life or have we been seduced by secular humanism also? Some of this happened in the beginning of the Charismatic renewal in the “secular churches” but those that had a little light stayed in that darkness until their light was extinguished and many never escaped from humanism.

humanism >noun 1 a rationalistic system of thought attaching prime importance to

human rather than divine or supernatural matters.

We could also interpret this as setting the human in the center and declaring that everything revolves around man. God exists to bless man and make him happy. If “I” was the only one Jesus would have died just for me. A “secular saint” is one who is living for himself and considers himself the center of the universe and demands that God provide everything for him. He feels that he is worthy and Jesus is lucky to have him sitting on the throne to show Jesus what needs to get done and how soon He needs to do it. The “secular saint” is the lord and Jesus is his servant.

Since John 3:16 is the Matra of the “secular saint” he is limited to flying with one wing and just goes around in circles. Nevertheless, he testifies how much ground he has covered.

The “secular saint” will observe everything from the viewpoint of “relativism.” The thought is that everything is “relative” and there are no absolutes. We might call this “secular relativism.” If everything is “relative” then there can be no conclusion to any demand of the Kingdom. If we remove all the “absolutes” then everything really is relative. The problem is this: What the Kingdom presents is eternally absolute.

Therefore, another concern for the contemporary church is the “relativism” that has dominated the messages.

relativism >noun the doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute.

Until the Kingdom is clearly presented as God’s Absolute, the message will always carry some “relativism.” “Well, I know I am not what I ought to be but God knows my heart and He knows that I am sincere and I know that He loves me just like I am” is “humanistic relativism.” This “philosophy” will not buy us anything in the Kingdom but will condemn us to a life outside the Kingdom. When this kind of stuff is common in the “visible church” should we raise some concerns? All this seems to be common and acceptable when the “outward church is increasing in numbers” but when there is NO REAL “inward church” being built!

The “mechanical power” of the “secular church” can be increased and numbers can be added through advertizing, publicity, TV shows, radio, books, media presentations and popular speakers! Even celebrities in the congregation can add numbers. However, Spiritual power and the “inward church” doesn’t require any of these things. The early church had none of these things and yet turned the world upside down. Of course we are not living in the early church and we can use everything that is available to us “to compel them to come in” but what will really draw people is when the “outward church” is the same as the “inward church” that He is building. This seems to be the great draw in the Book of Acts.

My theory is that the superficiality in the “outward church” is simply because of the shallowness of the “inward church.” More effort and programs designed for the “outward church” will provide us a very small return on our investment in eternity. Investing in “His church” appears to be the best investment opportunity today. Of course our investment in our own ISL [Inner Spiritual Life] is the most important first investment and one that will pay dividends in eternity.

If our own investments have not been successful in our “inner church” we should probably not attempt to export our ideas or try to fix the “outer church.”