

#338 Kingdom: Centered In Man OR Centered In God?

Ever since man fell from the first grace that God had bestowed in the Garden of Eden, he has been self-centered, man centered, earth centered, time centered or things centered. It is little wonder that “salvation” has left man “ME” centered and basically with the exact same center as before he was born again. While this may seem like a very small thing, it is evident from scripture that until there is a drastic change of centers we are not experiencing the “fulness” of His “so great a salvation”.

Romans 14: 7] For **not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; [8] for, if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.** [9] For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

This scripture speaks of one who denies himself to live for the Lord. This is the cross principle that man has been directed to live by or what we call the personal cross. Christ's LORDSHIP is directly linked to our living or dying for the Lord. In fact the very purpose of Calvary was to entirely change the center from which we live or die.

(1) Man Center; We live for our self and we die for our self.

(2) Christ Center; We live for the Lord and we die for the Lord.

2 Cor 5: 14] For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; [15] **and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.**

The basic center of the born-again person has not changed. However, until the center of our life has changed from man-center to Christ-center, the purpose of Calvary has not been fulfilled. Obviously there are multitudes of believers who are trusting by faith in the “sacrifice of Calvary”, for their eternal salvation, that have not made that radical shift in the center of their lives and the very purpose of Calvary. The individual cross has not been understood or embraced. The “historic cross of Calvary” is fully embraced and accepted for what man can receive in forgiveness of sins. The individual cross is rejected because man can see no personal benefit in it. Jesus Christ died on Calvary so I would not have to die so what benefit can there possibly be for me in a personal cross. Since He suffered for

me, why should I also suffer?

To no longer live for yourself but for Him, who died for you, is a very radical thought in the lukewarm church today. The casual believers today would cringe at such a demand by God because they feel that they did God a favor by “accepting His Son” as their sacrifice before God. Since they “sacrificed the pleasures of the world” they are entitled to repayment by God and His Divine favor upon their lives. To forsake gross sin and then also to be required to either live OR die for the Lord is an unreasonable requirement. The super grace preachers would certainly agree.

Why is it then that this counterfeit “gospel” is preached by men who also know the scriptures? “The salvation that is preached” is centered in man’s need for redemption and, his need for forgiveness of sins. This “gospel” has left man self centered and focused upon what God has done “for man.” We hear such things as “If you were the only sinner on the earth Christ would have come and died just for you. “You” then is the center of the universe and the sole purpose for Christ to come and die on Calvary. This is considered by some to be orthodox Christian teaching.

Then why should we be challenging this concept of God’s grace? The fact is we are not challenging God’s grace but the application of grace that is inconsistent with the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The gospel of the Kingdom seeks to refocus man upon the ORIGINAL center for the universe. It is basically to dethrone man and reestablish Jesus Christ as LORD and to give Him absolute preeminence in everything.

Col 1:18] He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; **so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.**

The “orthodox” gospel of salvation makes man the recipient of all that was accomplished on Calvary but leaves man centered in himself. The Gospel of The Kingdom illuminates man’s complete responsibility before God to do His will and live solely for Him. The perverted “gospel of grace” releases man from doing the will of God. It presents doing the will of God or to serve Him fully with our life or our death as an option. Some preach that doing the whole will of God is just that we might receive a reward at the end. Some even preach that doing the will of God is just works that are of no benefit to man. This is just the problem we are addressing. If it doesn’t benefit man it is irrelevant. Therefore, the eternal cross principle upon which the Kingdom operates is ignored

The gospel of grace is presented as “what man can get from God for free.” The salvation seeker asks “What can I get from God?” “I” am the center of this whole Christian experience. Calvary’s sacrifice was just for me.

Titus 2:11] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, [12] instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age

It is obvious that the **Grace of God is a person and not a thing**. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is firmly attached to the person and not just a commodity to be distributed. We may get away with many things with a commodity but we must obey the Person, who IS the Grace.

Heb 5: 8] Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. [9] And having been made perfect, **He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation**

In other words our salvation embraces the personal cross. Here then is a challenge to the basic concepts that are accepted in many evangelical circles concerning the gospel message. The appeal for sinners to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior is essentially selfish and man-centered. The gospel preacher makes an appeal for the sinner to come and “get some thing from God” that is going to benefit the person.” The appeal is to escape hell and make heaven your home for eternity. Here is an opportunity for gain without the need of loss. The peripheral benefit is that as a child of God you may keep on “getting” from your heavenly Father. If you come to our church we will teach you how you can continue to get good things from God. YOU is still the center and God is there to serve you.

The TV preachers have promoted the “come and get philosophy” and took it to several levels beyond the evangelical philosophy. They promise riches and wealth beyond your fondest dreams. Since the Father owns all the silver and all the gold and all the cattle on a thousand hills, He has plenty to divide up with His children. Therefore, you can grab your inheritance now and go into a far country to spend it. When sinners see how wealthy you are they will want to “get saved” so they also can be rich. They have carried the “come and receive the benefits” to new highs. There are always several new books that seek to raise the man centered gospel to new heights of personal prosperity and carnal benefits.

My theory is that the real Gospel of the Kingdom will render all these man centered words completely obsolete. Many individuals who were “birthed” into the come and

get philosophy are wondering why it is not working for them. My hope is that very soon all who are “birthed into the Kingdom” will be birthed into a God centered philosophy where Jesus Christ is LORD and man is His bond slave. My hope is that the eternal cross will become the personal cross of each person that has been birthed into the kingdom. It may be true that the church will not be as large but it at least will not be lukewarm, casual and uncommitted.

Will this philosophy that every believer is to give themselves to God as His Bond slaves result in a sudden revival with multitudes rushing to the front to present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice? Probably not! My theory is that this change from man-center to God-center is the basis for the Lampstand Church. The man-centered gospel has ignored the internal cross within man that brings about his rectification into a Kingdom person who just lives for the Lord.

When we see how Jesus Christ revealed Himself to each of the Lampstand Churches and how He was correcting them and threatening them, it should be clear that what we generally see today are NOT Lampstand Churches hammered out of one piece of Gold. When He threatened to remove the Lampstand from the church at Ephesus it is obvious that they would just be left with an Outer Court religious club. If we can read Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 and still think the Lampstand Church is man centered we must recheck our comprehension. The necessity for the personal and internal cross within each church is revealed in His exhortation.

To always interpret scriptures from a man centered viewpoint results in strange doctrines that in my opinion are corrupted. My theory is that we are living in a time that demands change! The “change” must refocus the believer upon the God Centered gospel of the Kingdom in order to understand the scriptures dealing with the individual cross. Every truth that we comprehend is still just part of the whole Truth that IS Christ. For that reason each group may have a partial truth but until there is a synthesis of truth there will only remain partial truth and not the ultimate Truth which is the Person.

In this same way we can never understand the full magnitude of God’s eternal purpose as long as we are looking from a man centered viewpoint. The earth and time are the wrong perspective by which we can “see” God’s Ultimate Purpose.

COL 3:1 If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. [3] For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

This sets God's Point of Reference as the only valid beginning point from which we can view eternal Truth. Every thing in creation only has relevance when viewed from the heavenly viewpoint. God is the exact starting point for ALL things. Everything has begun in Him, therefore, everything must be viewed from His vantage point. The "beginning point" for all revelation is the heart of God before the world was restored. If we begin with man, our comprehension is blurred by man's needs and his well being, therefore our conclusion is corrupted by a time / earth / man / viewpoint.

In Genesis 1 and in many of the books of the New Testament the message begins with God and then reason down to man. Here is an example of what we are referring to.

Heb 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, [2] in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. [3] And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. [4] In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth

God's viewpoint of history begins with Himself. If we begin with man we are certain to arrive at the wrong interpretation of history and the scriptures. We will never arrive at the magnitude of God's total plan for creation IF we begin with man or with the fall in Genesis 3. Rectifying the church now from a man centered interpretation of scriptures and salvation to a God centered understanding will not be quick OR easy. The "man centered" approach will always be the desire of the carnal Christian that is only interested in what he can get from God for free. To be expected to first set down and count the cost is not popular with the casual Christian who now believes that anything that is not free cannot be God's plan.

The believer who has been birthed into a "church system" that has taught that the believer can be centered in his own little universe where God is just waiting to serve him will be difficult to be convinced that the Gospel of the Kingdom can be the real gospel.

Since the Gospel of the Kingdom is the Gospel of the Demands and the Gospel of the Requirements AND the gospel where we must pay the price and run the race to be counted worthy, it will be the Gospel of the Rejection by much of the visible church.

The dictionary of Bible words tells us that in Hebrew there is no word for faith. The Hebrew word is "FAITHFULNESS."

Romans 4: 9----For we say, "FAITH WAS RECKONED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. If we word this according to the Hebrew we would translate this as; "Faithfulness was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. If this is correct, it changes the way we see the definition of faith and grace. The modern gospel, that focuses upon man as the center, interprets "faithfulness" as works."

It must also be true that, as some have pointed out, we cannot even begin our interpretation of scripture from the Kingdom but we must again begin with the Heart of God and His Eternal Purpose before the world was. Of course the "Kingdom" is part of the heart of God but God is still the cause and the Kingdom is the effect.

If we are raised up and seated with Him, we discover that in that position we actually are living in the Eternal Viewpoint so that we should see as God sees from His perspective. Is Colossians 3 then only a doctrinal "position in Christ" or is it an experience "in Christ." Paul seems to present our being raised up as an actual experience rather than just a doctrinal position. However, he adds a small doubt "IF we are raised up" which puts some question mark there. "IF" we are in Christ and He is at the right hand of God it seems clear that "In Christ" we also are raised up and seated with Christ in God.

If this is just a doctrinal statement, our viewpoint will not change and we will remain earth bound and our vision perspective will be from earth and from a man center. Doctrines seldom change anything and become something to meditate upon and consider in the light of other doctrines. They become a philosophical viewpoint of scriptural truth but without much practical use IF they don't lead us to the exact experience contained in the doctrine. For example; multitudes have been baptized in water believing a doctrine about baptism but experience none of the things spoken of in Romans 6 or other scriptures. We may know all the doctrines about salvation and still not be born again. Many Pentecostal believers were certain about the doctrine that "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you" but received no power. [and you shall become My martyrs was not mentioned in the doctrine.]

Even these conferences that are labeled “deeper life” do little more than teach 7 steps to receive more from God or a promise to lay hands on you to impart a special blessing or transfer some gift or power to you to thrust you into some great ministry. People believe this stuff and want to receive something to benefit themselves. Over the years many have been sent out into “ministry” that had no calling, no grace and no anointing and no idea what laying down your life for the gospel meant. They see popular “men of God” riding around in personal Jets, driving expensive cars, living in elegant life styles, staying in 5 star hotels with an entourage of aids and think this is a good vocation to pursue.

Few new “ministers” are made to understand that power in ministry comes about by a transformed inner life that is wholly given to do the will of God. It appears that everyone is just seeking the power to knock people down. For example the preaching restoration from the 1700's to 1900 demonstrated the power of the inner life to bring the conviction of sin and salvation of souls.

There is a man centered philosophy that is flooding the believers from every media that is destroying the basic foundation of the church. It has made personal sacrifice and a life laid down for Christ as the wrong doctrine of the ignorant. They say Paul only suffered and was in want because he had not yet discovered the law of sowing and reaping. Destroying these false philosophies that are presented as truth will not be quick or easy nor will the one who preaches truth be accepted.

Religious Politics are more ruthless and corrupt sometimes than Secular Politics. We can vote out corrupt government officials but we are stuck with the religious ones because the hierarchy supports them. The popular saying is that the Kingdom is not democratic which means that we are stuck with any worthless church hierarchy because they represent the Kingdom of God.

How to release all those who were birthed into this self centered, man centered gospel, will be a problem for the next generation of preachers.