

BIBLICAL PRAXIS OF MISSION

Class 2: Discipleship In Light Of The Coming Kingdom

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I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- A. Eschatology determines missiology. One's understanding of the end logically determines the means to that end. Biblical eschatology is based on perfect cosmogeny, which sets the foundation and context for salvation at the end of the age.
- B. In this light the primary missiological role of the *ekklesia* in this age is to acknowledge and worship God as good and holy, righteous and loving, in his governance over creation. He is sovereign over all things, even the height of human wickedness and death, because he loves the evil people who are causing the death and suffering. Our role is to trust his benevolent sovereignty and submit to his ordained means of restoration, the Messianic Seed of Adam whom he has chosen.

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (ESV 1 Timothy 1:15-17)

II. THE SECONDARY ROLE OF THE EKKLESIA

- A. In light of the coming Messianic Kingdom, and the judgment and restoration therein, the secondary role of the Church is to honor the King whom we serve through our lifestyle and prepare for our inheritance in his kingdom.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (NIV Titus 2:11-14)

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. (NIV Colossians 2:6-8)

- B. This is the context of the biblical exhortation to discipleship and sanctification. The Church is called to holiness and righteousness because the King we serve and his coming kingdom will be ruled by those who are holy and righteous. This is radically different than the common context for discipleship of an immaterial heaven.

Therefore (because of the living hope of resurrection and salvation, v.3-12), preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (i.e. resurrected body, v.4-5). ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance

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(about the resurrection), ¹⁵ **but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,** ¹⁶ **since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."** ¹⁷ **And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds** (cf. Is. 40:10; 62:11; Mt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12), **conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile** (unto your inheritance), ¹⁸ **knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,** ¹⁹ **but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.** (ESV 1 Peter 1:13-19)

1. "Discipleship" therefore is simply *training to reign*. Because all government is based on love and ability, God has provided a context and opportunity for all the nations to be purified of selfishness, pride and greed and to be made worthy to rule over the earth in genuine love for its highest well-being.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me (i.e. benevolent sovereignty, inevitably resulting in the resurrection and judgment, cf. Acts 2:35; Heb. 10:13; etc.). ¹⁹ **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations** (in preparation for that Kingdom), **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit** (for assurance of inclusion in that Kingdom), ²⁰ **and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age** (when the Kingdom is established). (NIV Matthew 28:18-20)

2. God calls his followers to be holy in character and lifestyle, unto future governance over the earth, as He is holy in character and lifestyle in his everlasting governance over creation.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ **by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature** (i.e. resurrection), **having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.** ⁵ **For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith** (in the resurrection and Kingdom) **with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,** ⁶ **and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,** ⁷ **and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.** ⁸ **For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** ⁹ **For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind** (i.e. lack of vision for the age to come), **having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.** ¹⁰ **Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.** ¹¹ **For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** (ESV 2 Peter 1:3-12)

3. In this way, we live lives "worthy" of the kingdom of God and the age to come—not that our lives qualify us for the inheritance, but that our lives emulate the righteousness of that which we have been called to.

You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. ¹¹ **For you know that we dealt with each of you as a**

father deals with his own children, ¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. (NIV 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12)

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved-- and that by God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him. (NIV Philippians 1:27-29)

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰ And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. (NIV Colossians 1:9-12)

4. It is the judgment and righteousness of the coming kingdom that sets the standard for holiness in this age. Sanctification and a higher moral standard are not arbitrary realities given by God in this age before we die and go to an ethereal "heaven"; they are real standards that will be enforced on the earth in the age to come.

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³ so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. ^{4:1} Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God (benevolently ruling over creation); ⁶ that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. (ESV 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:7).

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person-- such a man is an idolater-- has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. (NIV Ephesians 5:5-11)

5. Discipleship and sanctification are thus the simple outworking of worship and faith. We obey because we love our Father and King. We want to honor the One we serve. We want to be like our Father. We want to please our God now as he will be pleased in the age to come. We are living out our lives in reverent fear of the Day of the Lord.

***Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.* (ESV Philippians 2:12-16)**

See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." (cf. Hag. 2:6)... ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our "God is a consuming fire." (cf. Deut. 4:24) (NIV Hebrews 12:25-29)

- C. Jesus exhorts his disciples to servanthood, meekness and love because they will reign in a real government on the earth. The modern Church generally disregards discipleship and sanctification because immaterial "heaven" has no real government to prepare for.

And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God..." ²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest (in the coming Kingdom). ²⁵ And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them (function selfishly in government), and those in authority over them are called benefactors (hypocritically give lip service to benevolent governance). ²⁶ But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves (for the well-being of those governed). ²⁷ For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves (modeling messianic governmental character). ²⁸ You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, ²⁹ and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom (i.e. co-government within the Kingdom), ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (ESV Luke 22:15-30)

- Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called 'friends of the people.' ²⁶ But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. (NLT Luke 22:25-26)

1. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. Their first response is worship, expressed in earnest expectation of the Kingdom. In light of this, they are taught to pray for grace to walk in holiness and blamelessness in preparation for that Kingdom.

***Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread (cf. vv.19-34), ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* (ESV Matthew 6:9-15)**

2. Jesus models the righteous governance of the coming age before his death by taking on the role of the lowest servant.

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love... ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power ("authority" NLT)... ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet (the job of the lowest servant/slave), drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you (as Messiah) going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later (in the messianic kingdom) you will understand." ⁸ "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me (cf. inheritance in the Kingdom)."... ¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am (i.e. Messiah). ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example (of messianic governmental character) that you should do as I have done for you... ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed (in the coming messianic kingdom) if you do them." (NIV John 13:1-17)

- ***Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God (governmentally, cf. v. 11) as something to be exploited, ⁷ but emptied himself (governmentally), taking the form of a slave (for the well-being of the whole), being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him (governmentally) and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend (in the Kingdom), in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NRSV Philippians 2:3-11)***

3. The apostles likewise exhort and model servanthood, meekness and humility in preparation for the Kingdom.

To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ ***I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (i.e. benefits/rewards in the Kingdom).*** ²⁴ ***Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize (resurrection and authority).*** ²⁵ ***Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training (cf. discipleship/sanctification). They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.*** ²⁶ ***Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.*** ²⁷ ***No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (NIV 1 Corinthians 9:22-27)***

When I was with you, I certainly gave you proof that I am an apostle. For I patiently did many signs and wonders and miracles among you. ¹³ ***The only thing I failed to do, which I do in the other churches, was to become a financial burden to you. Please forgive me for this wrong!*** ¹⁴ ***Now I am coming to you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you (for my own well-being). I don't want what you have-- I want you. After all, children don't provide for their parents. Rather, parents provide for their children (assuming parents function in benevolent government).*** ¹⁵ ***I will gladly spend myself and all I have for you, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me...*** ¹⁹ ***Perhaps you think we're saying these things just to defend ourselves. No, we tell you this as Christ's servants, and with God as our witness. Everything we do, dear friends, is to strengthen you. (NLT 2 Corinthians 12:12-19)***

As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, ⁷ but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children... ⁹ ***Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.*** ¹⁰ ***You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.*** ¹¹ ***For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God (in preparation for the Kingdom), who calls you into his kingdom and glory. (NIV 1 Thessalonians 2:6-12)***

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ ***He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. (ESV 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)***

4. It is the real governance of the age to come, and the righteousness and reward therein, that is a primary motivator of the human heart. The lack of a real government and real rewards in an ethereal "heaven" is one of the main reasons for the lack of discipleship and sanctification in the church today.

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may

invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." ¹⁵ When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." (NIV Luke 14:12-15)

Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again... ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. ³² Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (NIV Acts 20:25-32)

The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor... ¹³ his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. (NIV 1 Corinthians 3:8-14)

God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption ("destruction" NIV, i.e. Gehenna), but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life ("everlasting life" NKJV/NLT, i.e. resurrection). ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (ESV Galatians 6:7-9)

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (NIV Colossians 3:22-24)

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: ² Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-- with great patience and careful instruction. ³ For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths... ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (NIV 2 Timothy 4:1-8)