

A Kingdom View

We are not here just to mend ourselves and go to heaven. We are here to mend the world.

This is a strategic time in history. I believe the cultural atmosphere for generations to come will be shaped by what happens in the next few years.

There are many radical young people contending to change the world. We see fanatic Islamists sacrificing their lives for Islam. We see the Nashists—young Russian zealots—willing to do whatever Mother Russia asks of them to see Russia succeed.

My generation is looking for a cause. That's why so many flock to see Bono, the global activist and lead singer of the rock band U2. He has a remarkable influence on youth culture worldwide because he is addressing the problems of global poverty and war. He has hit on a message that resonates deeply with the calling of this generation.

The kingdom of God is not just spiritual. It's also physical and earthly—and we have been entrusted with the keys to it! We are not here just to mend ourselves and go to heaven. We are here to go beyond ourselves and mend the world.

Christ showed us how. He lived and died for those who didn't believe in Him, who didn't share His values and way of life. Isn't this what He has called us to do?

Recently, I went to a meeting in Hollywood and learned that decades ago producers sent film scripts to a board of representatives from major denominations to determine what movies were uplifting and to censor what would be detrimental

to society. One day the council told the producers they no longer had time to screen movies because they had too many church activities.

The producers warned that if the council was dissolved, the moral standard would decline. The council dissolved anyway, and within a year, the first X-rated film came out. Clearly, the failure of Christians to be salt and light is responsible for the deluge of immorality that has swept our nation.

During the last century, what was happening in the church? Many Christians felt it was pointless to keep working to improve a society that was just going to be swept away in the Second Coming—although Jesus clearly commanded His followers to make disciples of all nations and to teach entire nations to obey His commandments and practice everything He taught (see Matt. 28:19-20).

We have seen a moral decline in society because those who have the light have stepped out of the places of influence in their communities. And in our churches we convert people to church-centeredness, not kingdom-centeredness. This is what one of the greatest missionaries of the 20th century called “sub-conversion.”

E. Stanley Jones, whose work greatly influenced Martin Luther King Jr., writes: “If the new birth were set in the framework of the Church it would probably mean the one undergoing the new birth will be baptized and join the Church and be a faithful attendant and supporter of a church. In certain cases there will be fringe benefits—prayer, Bible reading, renunciation of wrong habits and associations, and a strong witness to this new way of life. But—and this is the point—all is within the framework of the church. ... He does not have the

length and breadth of the framework of the Kingdom. ... The conversion is limited to the outlook and spirit of that church.”

So what is the answer? The church must no longer be an end in itself. We must own the problems of the world because they are our problems, because as a kingdom of priests, God has given us the responsibility to lead the culture. We have the answer—Christ and His kingdom.

Jesus taught us to pray for His kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. This prayer will be answered. He will not use angels to do this work. He will use those who fully surrender the kingdom of self to the kingdom of God to let Christ reign within and accomplish “the greater works” that are the result of being led by His Holy Spirit.

As Christians take hold of this concept, we can expect greater and greater things in our future, for Isaiah proclaimed: “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end” (Is. 9:7, NKJV).

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