

Disciple Nations

God is sending Christians not to build churches but to change the nations.

Too many Christians and Christian leaders spend their energy, creativity and precious time promoting churches instead of the kingdom. They work for the success of their church or perhaps for a group of churches in their city, or they work for their ministry or denomination.

They believe that by building churches and ministries they are building the kingdom. They think church and kingdom are practically synonymous. This isolation of the church from the world has led to ineffectiveness and failure to carry out the Great Commission.

The church is not the kingdom. Jesus said: "Nor will people say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21, NKJV). It's not confined to temples and churches. No church can contain or control the kingdom of God. The kingdom is meant to inhabit the entire earth, not just your church sanctuary.

The Great Commission is not what many of us have understood it to be. We have understood it to be evangelism-bringing people from the world into our church buildings. But the Great Commission mandate is to go out and disciple nations. The focus is not in here, but out there. This was Jesus' goal in coming to Earth. It is supposed to be our goal as redeemed people.

The Great Commission Jesus gave us is, "'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations'" (Matt. 28:19). Jesus did not say, "Go and build great churches." He did not even say, "Go and save individuals." He never said, "May Your church come on Earth as it is in heaven." Neither did He say, "Seek first the church and all its righteousness."

Rather, His heartbeat is for nations to be ruled by kingdom principles. That is the calling of every believer and every church.

So why has our attention been lavished on personal evangelism and building churches? The problem is our mind-set. We often forget that the kingdom has come. We forget we have been called to rule our promised lands-and to rule nations. We forget about the power we received from Jesus Christ.

So our attention is drawn to churches. Building a church seems much more manageable than transforming a nation.

Today many people sit in church pews hoping to make it to the kingdom of God, and they don't realize that, according to Jesus, the kingdom is here and now. Nobody has to die to see the kingdom. We are as close as we will ever get.

Jesus didn't leave the kingdom of God in heaven when He came to Earth. He brought it with Him. The born-again believer is in the kingdom at this moment.

When we forget that the kingdom is here and now, we shrink from our calling to disciple nations. We want to use the church as our escape hatch from the world's problems. The battle is certainly fierce, but God is sending Christians not to hide out in or even to build churches but to have impact on lives and on the nations of the world.

If you are trying only to build a church, your goal is wrong. The promise of God is, "'Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance'" (Ps. 2:8).

Imagine that! We are meant to inherit nations. We are responsible not for sanctuaries and Sunday school rooms but for our nations. We are not separate from our nations in God's sight. We belong to nations. God will hold us responsible for nations.

We cannot flee into the church and think our hands will be washed clean of all that happens outside. We are called to the world to restore the kingdom. And if there is any nation that is suffering under a godless culture, it's because Christians have not subdued it with kingdom principles.

Some people believe that if they work in the nursery or sing in the choir they are fulfilling their area of ministry. But this is not truly ministry; it is merely housekeeping.

Your work as a choir member, nursery volunteer or usher is what we all must do to keep the church functioning, but it is not necessarily fulfilling the Great Commission. The Great Commission happens outside the church. Ministry is what you do to bring your life and your sphere of influence under kingdom rule.

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