

Joseph Mattera: God, Politics and the Kingdom of God

Whether Christian or non-Christian, any group that has an unbalanced concentration of power (e.g. the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, or certain points of corruption in Western European history that compromised the Roman Catholic church, such as the Inquisition) will eventually be decentralized by God so that proper checks and balances can prosper both the civil liberties of people and the aforementioned jurisdictions.

As far as I am concerned, the key verse in the entire Bible that explains the mission of the church is Genesis 1:28:

"God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

Many theologians have called this passage the cultural mandate because this original covenant with Adam, the federal head of the human race, gives the human race the responsibility of stewarding the earth, which involves managing every aspect of life and society. After the fall, God recapitulated this same command by giving it to Noah in Genesis 9:1-2:

"Then God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Every beast of the earth and every bird of the sky and all that moves on the earth and all the fish of the sea will fear you and be terrified of you. They are given into your hand.'"

This proves that the cultural mandate was still in effect after the fall. Furthermore, Mathew 28:18-20 has been called by some theologians the Second Commission instead of the Great Commission because Jesus as the second or last Adam (1 Cor.

15:45) gave the godly seed (the church) another form of the cultural mandate when He told the church to disciple the nations.

Discipling whole nations must include applying the commandments of God to all of practical life: politics, business, art, science, history, education, sociology and so forth. Thus, it is a recapitulation of what God told the first Adam in Genesis 1:28.

When someone wonders whether or not the church should be involved in politics, they are missing the bigger picture of the cultural mandate, in which the church is called to be the center of all of culture by influencing every discipline and jurisdiction with the biblical worldview.

Second Corinthians 10:5 tells us to take every thought captive to the knowledge of God. This is not just an individual but a corporate command for the created order.

Although I believe in the separation of church and state, I do not believe in the separation of God and state because we are called to bear fruit, multiply, replenish the earth (consecrate the earth to God), subdue the earth (disarm the enemies of God) and have dominion (work for the reformation of every system and institution on earth so that it reflects the biblical ethos).

Many Christians have an unscriptural belief that the spiritual world is important and the natural world is unimportant.! Jesus told us to pray that His will would be done on earth as it is in heaven (Luke 11 and Matt. 6). This shows that God wants us to focus on the earth in our life and prayers; even though, the present “last days” focus emphasis is on “escape, retreat and get caught up to heaven” indicates the church currently emphasizes the opposite of this!

My book *Ruling in the Gates* shows that the cultural mandate in Genesis 1:28 was never annulled but is the common theme

throughout both the Old and New Testaments in regards to God's mission for His covenant people.

The following terms have vast political implications, without which you could never understand the nature and mission of Jesus, the crucifixion or the church:

1. The kingdom of God.

a. Every kingdom has a king, a land, a political government, laws and commands, a society and an economy.

b. In Mark 1:15, Jesus told us the kingdom of God is here (see also Matt. 4:17).

c. Paul went about "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord [political title] Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:31).

d. The kingdom of God is the whole created order, not just the church. (Ps. 24:1a says, "The earth belongs to the Lord, and its fullness.")

e. The church is in the kingdom but is not the totality of the kingdom.

2. King of kings, and Lord of lords.

a. Jesus is called this title in various portions of Scripture. (See 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 1:5; 19:16.)

b. This is the most politically charged title a person can possibly have!

c. Notice, it does not say Jesus is merely the King of heaven or the King of the church, or that He would be the King in the next life.

d. Ephesians 1:21 says He is above all governments and has a name that is greater than all names in this life and that which is to come.

e. "King of kings" means that he is presently the president of all presidents, the King of all kings, the prime minister over all prime ministers, the governor over all governors. In other words, Mayor Bloomberg, Gov. Spitzer and President Bush are all presently accountable to Jesus Christ as their Lord and ruler!

f. This is political, not merely spiritual, because it means Jesus is judging these authorities in regard to public policy, international issues, the economy, taxation, tort laws and so forth. In other words, how their policies and laws reflect the law-Word of God, especially the laws extrapolated out of the Ten Commandments in the civil laws of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

3. Ecclesia.

a. *Ecclesia* is the Greek word for "church" in the New Testament.

b. Jesus chose a well-known secular word with political implications to describe His followers.

c. In Greek culture, the *ecclesia* were the citizens who came together in a community to enact public policy. *Ecclesia*, broadly speaking, means to come together to rule. In other words, Jesus called His followers the new congress of His kingdom.

4. The gates of hell.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says the church would assault the gates of hell, which are ungodly political and social systems. "Gates" is an Old Testament term that denotes where the elders of a city met to enact public policy, declare war and conduct financial and legal business.

5. The crucifixion.

a. Jesus was not crucified because of religious reasons but

because of politics! Roman-Greco culture was a polytheistic society with thousands of gods and religions.

b. They would never execute someone for religious reasons because they were not a monotheistic empire. The New Testament teaches that Jesus was crucified because He proclaimed Himself a king, in essence the only true Caesar or potentate (1 Tim. 6:15) which became a threat to the political powers of the time.

c. Notice in John 18:37, Jesus told Pilate that His purpose for coming to the world was to be king and testify to the truth. John 19:12, 15-16 show that Pilate was about to let Jesus go free until the Jewish leaders said that Christ's claim to be King threatened Caesar's kingdom and rule.

In conclusion, we cannot understand the gospel, the kingdom of God, the nature of the church or the mission of Christ without understanding their political and social implications. {eoa}

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