

General Topics :: The Constantine Contamination-Kingdom saint? part 1 -bro Frank

The Constantine Contamination-Kingdom saint? part 1 -bro Frank, on: 2013/11/5 14:07

This article will be in two parts and will explore the effect that the Emperor Constantine had on the church world then and as we know it today and how this relates to genuine Kingdom or remnant saints. So what is the title of this article asking? What does it mean to be either a Kingdom, pilgrim or remnant saint? All of these titles describe one person, the saint who walks in the Kingdom of God. They come from every tribe, every tongue and every nation. They cross denominational lines. Their identity is established in Christ, not in men or men's Kingdom. The walk of such a saint is often a lonely walk.

In every century down through the ages, beginning with the death and resurrection of Jesus, we see this saint. He is a lover of the Truth and would rather die than deny this truth. He would rather walk this world alone than compromise the truth. His country cannot shake it, his friends cannot shake it nor even his family because while he may love all of these passionately, nothing even comes close to his passion for the Truth. He has been captured by it, bought by it, ruined for the things of this world by it. Of course this truth of which I speak is the way, the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father except by Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, ruler of the Kingdom of God.

Consider this parable that Jesus gave us. "Whoever comes to Me and hears My Words, and does them, I will show you to whom he is like. He is like a man who built a house and dug deep and laid the foundation on a rock; and a flood occurring, the stream burst against that house and could not shake it; for it was founded on a rock. But he who hears and does not perform, is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, on which the stream burst, and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great. (Luke 6:47-49 MKJV)

There are two men in the parable. One man hears the words or the commands of Jesus and he does them. He is obedient to his King because he belongs to the Kingdom of God. And, since he has built his life upon the solid rock, the foundation of Jesus, everything that he is in this world, everything that he does, rests upon the foundation of Jesus. And when the storm comes, when it rages and is so prolonged that it makes the rivers burst their banks and rise up and sweep everything away that is not firmly rooted, then the Kingdom saint, the pilgrim will still be standing. This is how we know, according to Jesus, who is of and who is not of the Kingdom. For the man who is not obedient to the commands of his King has no foundation and that same storm will simply sweep him away and great will be his ruin.

LOOKING BACK IN ORDER TO SEE AHEAD

Now I would like to take you to a time and place in history where this very parable plays out. It plays out in the larger sense. For while this parable of Jesus certainly applies to individuals first and foremost, it also applies to what claims to be the Church. The time is one not very many Christians know about. It is the time just prior to Constantine taking office. Now not many folks know too much about Constantine. Many know some myths about him, like he supposedly seen a cross in the sky prior to a battle and believed it was a sign from God and then went on to win the battle and convert to Christianity. Many also know this as a time when the Church changed from being a persecuted church to being part of the state, or as the time of the birth of the institutionalized Church, the merging of Church and state.

As you read on I want you to see why what happened during this period of time still affects us even till this day. And I want you to see why the Kingdom saint, the remnant saint, the pilgrim is such a threat to the institutional church. You will see that you are never more of a threat to the powers that be than when you expose them or shame them or reveal who they truly are (often by merely living a righteous life) This, of course is the effect that John the Baptist and Jesus had on the religious system of their day. They revealed many of them as mere men of the world, not lovers of God. These were men who were sold out to the Kingdoms of this world and its power structure and their role within that power structure which gave them prominence, stature and a comfortable living.

They were not lovers of the Truth and when the right storm came along, and the enemy came at them like a flood, they were simply exposed for what they truly were and what they actually stood for, much of the time it would have been as much of a revelation to themselves as well as others. Once revealed though, they would become the mortal enemies of those who actually stood upon the solid Rock of Jesus and who are obedient to their King even though it cost them everything. Now it is important to note that not all men who were ever involved in the institutionalized church were wicked men of the world. There were layers upon layers of subtlety and it often took good men, men who had been transformed by

the new birth, quite a journey to come out of her. As it was down through the centuries, so it still is today with many good men and women caught up in a system that was fatally flawed from the beginning and which is only truly revealed by a flood as in the parable in Luke 6 to which we have referred.

The time I want to take you to is the period between 260 AD and 303 AD. Now this was a time of relative peace for the Church. There was still sporadic persecution, but on the whole, empire wide, this was a time of peace. Why is this time period so significant for us in the west today? Well in that time the Church became lax. The peace did not bring about a deepening of their faith, in fact quite the opposite. Theological debates raged. Now some were necessary of course, but in this time of peace they had the luxury of not having to deal with persecution. I would say that you the reader and I live in such times. It is beginning to change but nevertheless we in the west live in such times. We have had much more than forty years to become lukewarm and untested in our faith as a Body. For the saints living in 303AD it was all about to change, as I believe it is for the saints living today in the west.

Diocletian, emperor of Rome suddenly initiated the most severe persecution ever unleashed on the Body of Christ. It would last for eight years and was empire wide. The houses of prayer (some of which were church buildings, but most were homes) were burned to the ground, Christians were rounded up and suffered the most horrendous tortures ever seen and saints were killed by the tens of thousands. The period of peace prior to this had not served the church well, but many when faced with such horror stood firm and would not recant their faith, praise God. They would rather be tortured and killed than to deny the Truth that burned in them. Yet many more would deny the faith. They could not stand under this onslaught and their "faith," was simply swept away because their foundation was not Jesus. The parable that Jesus spoke in Luke 6 was coming to pass. Now this had happened on a smaller scale before at the turn of the third century and their had been a split then, I would encourage the readers to study the Novationists and the issues that they dealt with.

After eight long years, Diocletian finally gave up and in 311 he issued an edict of toleration. He had failed to wipe out Christianity. He actually asked Christians for their prayers, stepped down as Emperor and would later kill himself, a fitting end that many tyrants have come to in the annals of history. Now we come to Constantine. Shortly after he became a co-regent of Rome with Licinius. Licinius would rule in the east and Constantine the west. Constantine had a favorable disposition towards Christians. His region of influence during the persecution offered some comfort and shelter to Christians. So when he came to power, it would seem that God Himself must have been answering the prayers of the saints. Yet as David Bercot points out in his book *The Kingdom That Turned the World Upside Down* "What the Church did not realize was that Satan had one more weapon in his arsenal: guile. If he and the world could not defeat the Kingdom, they would join it. Or rather they would cunningly entice the Christians to join them."

This is a brilliant point by Bercot. He rightly identifies that Satan knows all too well the old adage that if you cannot beat them, join them. Or rather, as David points out, have them join you. Satan had tried to prevail against the Church by wiping them out, but the Kingdom saints, those whose foundation was Christ and obedience to His commands, stood upon a foundation that could not be moved no matter how severe the storm. But what of those who had not stood the test, what of those whose foundation was not Christ Himself but merely religion and vying for their own position here on this earth? What does it mean to be swept away? Can we liken that to a falling away? And once fallen but not dead, what do these deniers of the faith do when the storm passes? They build their own systems and churches, they build religion, a religion that will be stocked with once-born men. And these once-born men will hate the twice-born man, the man that was born again into a Kingdom that cannot be shaken. The very existence of the twice-born man was and is and will be a constant source of, at best, irritation. At worse the once-born men hunt down and kill the twice-born man. (to be continued)