

**General Topics :: The Kingdom and Politics - Don Walker****The Kingdom and Politics - Don Walker - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2008/9/8 11:03**

The Kingdom and Politics

by Don Walker basileia08@yahoo.com

---

In Acts 4:12, Peter declares: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." Certainly that verse is familiar to virtually every evangelical Christian. What may surprise you is that Peter was not only making a theological statement about Jesus as the only way to be saved from the wrath of God, but he was making a political statement as well. What, you may ask, does his statement have to do with politics? To the mind of most believers today, the answer is absolutely nothing. But to those believers living in the first century, it was overwhelming in its political implications. The statement was a bold declaration of war against the Roman Empire. Because at the time of Peter's declaration, the Roman emperor was hailed as the "divine savior of the world." Mark Antony said that the sole work of the Roman emperor was, "to save where anyone needed to be saved." The inscriptions on the Roman coins proclaimed the concept of the emperor as a "divine savior."

In other words, the declaration of Jesus as Savior had tremendous implications in the political sphere. I do not mean by that the message of the gospel is merely, or even primarily, political. It is universal, addressing not only individuals but nations as well. The message of the Kingdom is not only for the salvation of our souls, but for the redemption of the created order. It challenges and threatens the humanistic political systems. This is what brought about the persecution of Christians within the Roman Empire. The charge leveled against them was, "They all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus" (Acts 17:7). In short, the reason Rome persecuted the Church was political, not religious. They were not killed because they merely worshipped Jesus, in the religious sense of that word, but because they disrupted the unity of the state, by refusing to make the confession that "Caesar is lord." Instead, their confession was that "Jesus is Lord." Undoubtedly, the Roman civil authorities understood, better than most Christians do today, the political implications of Christ's Lordship. I might add that most totalitarian governments today are aware of it as well.

Elsewhere the Apostle Paul unequivocally declared that civil governmental authorities are "ministers of God" (Rom. 13:4), responsible before God to protect the righteous and to be "an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil." Paul boldly proclaims that at Christ's ascension He was installed as Supreme Lord above all earthly authorities (Ephes. 1:20-22). All men, and that includes civil authorities, are obligated to acknowledge Christ's Lordship. Read Psalm 2:1-12. This psalm is specifically addressed to the civil governmental authorities—kings and judges (vs. 10). While the Bible does teach the separation of Church and State, it does not teach the separation of State and God. Civil authorities are just as responsible to God and His Word, as the elders of the church are responsible to God.

The theologian Carl F. Henry said: "If while evangelizing we abandon the sociopolitical realm to its own devices, we shall fortify the misimpression that the public order falls wholly outside the command and will of God, that Christianity deals with private concerns only; and we shall conceal the fact that government exists by God's will as His servant for the sake of justice and order."

Jesus Christ claimed that all authority in heaven and in the earth belonged to Him (Matt.28:18), and to affirm His lordship over the sphere of civil government is simply to acknowledge His dominion over a part of the whole. If our concept of Christ's kingdom involves anything less than this, we are allotting to Him a very small kingdom indeed, and one with which any Roman emperor would have been happy to coexist.

As a word of warning, I think it is important that we be aware of the danger of becoming the proverbial “lap dog” of any political party or faction. The Church must not yield its role of being a prophet to the nations. It has the task of speaking truth to power. It must always stand outside of the worldly systems and challenge them with the Word of God.

This is definitely not a day for the Church to be asleep. While Christians should avoid being politicized, this does not mean that pastors or individuals should not address the pressing social and moral issues of the day. Just the opposite is true. Christians need to be clear in what they say and stand by it. We need to step forward to meet the challenges of the day.

We must seek to avoid as much as possible, the polarization that characterizes much of the current political scene. Likewise, I believe that we should avoid “labeling” ourselves (conservative, liberal, Republican, Democrat, etc.) that allows people to put us in a “box” and dismiss what we have to say. Though I may agree with some of the positions held by some of these political or ideological groups, my true philosophical allegiance is with Christ and His kingdom.

Last but not least, there is a dire need for a compassionate Christianity. Like the early church, the modern church needs to cut across all lines and reach out to every segment of society. If not, as Martin Luther King once said, the church will eventually become irrelevant.