

THE CLASH OF KINGDOMS

The week before Easter was a rough one for Jesus. He had purposely come to Jerusalem to die in order to put an end to sin's curse. He came to take our place and offer himself in our stead, so that we could have real life. In doing that, He also began a revolution. It was a new Kingdom He began to proclaim and those who accepted it had to revolt against the existing kingdom. This kingdom was different than the kingdom of the world. Let's talk about this clash of kingdoms.

Read Luke 19:28-46

Q: The crowd who was excited for Jesus' coming to Jerusalem were Jews who saw this "son of David" as one who would help them overthrow Roman control, who would put them back in charge and on top of the heap where they belonged. They wanted to have a theocracy where Jesus was King and they were His rulers. Why didn't Jesus accommodate them?

A: Because that was not the plan that God had. Jesus didn't come to reform the existing Kingdom; He came to establish a new one altogether. He proclaimed the Kingdom as the place where God rules, people matter, the oppressed are lifted up, the broken are healed, the hungry are fed and where all live in relationship with God and one another. It begins here on earth as we live that way and treat others as God wants them treated. It will ultimately happen though as everyone comes into vital relationship with God through Jesus. So the Kingdom is both present as well as coming.

Q: The Jewish Religious leaders had a sweet deal going. They were in charge of the Jews and they were living in cooperation with Rome in such a way that they had adequate autonomy as well as the means for financial success. Why did they see Jesus and His Kingdom as a threat?

A: They saw blessing as God's payment to them for doing the right thing. They saw their power and financial strength as God's approval and theirs to enjoy. Jesus talked about blessing as the way God worked through the Jews in order to be a blessing to the

world. Jesus talked about the poor and weak in ways that made them and their lifestyle look self-serving. Jesus talked about living in such a way that would actually come into conflict with the political structure and they were so embedded with it that they didn't want to lose what they had worked so hard to gain. They didn't want to lose their influence, power over people or their money.

Q: Jesus talked about the powerful as oppressors, the rich as self-serving and the "religious" as empty on the inside, but "holy-looking" on the outside. He wasn't subtle. He offended people and frankly did so to the point that he was "killed" for it. Why didn't he just suggest "reforming" the current kingdom to make it more God-friendly and kind?

A: He knew that someone who has no intention of bringing glory to God runs the kingdom of this world. He knew that the only way for God to rule was for Him to give himself up to break the hold of the worldly kingdom and to call His followers to live in the reality of the emerging Kingdom of God. He knew that the kingdom of the world couldn't just be changed; it had to be overthrown if people were going to know their creator and experience His loving presence, healing and provision in their lives.

Q: Clearly, the Kingdom of God has not yet completely replaced the kingdom of this world, though it is emerging. Does this mean that we stop trying to influence this earthly kingdom?

A: Jesus told us to be salt and light and be in the world but not of it (John 17). Paul encouraged believers to be in the world (1 Cor 5:9-13). In the act of influencing the worldly kingdom others will see God and taste how good He is and switch their kingdom-loyalty. We are to be in this world to influence it for the Kingdom of God.

Q: Do you think the church of today could be threatened by this message? If so, how so? How can we, as a church, make sure we're standing for the "right" kingdom?

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