

## WHERE IS YOUR ALLEGIANCE?

When we profess the Lordship of Jesus Christ, it means that we forsake ALL to follow Him. In the pursuit of a PERSON, we make the choice to let go of other pursuits. Notice that Paul the apostle reduced himself to a SINGLE FOCUS: “That I might know Him, and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead...but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind...I press toward the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus”; Philippians 3:10-14.

When Jesus is Lord of our life, His Kingdom becomes our focus. Kingdoms of men and men’s issues (such as politics, the economy, social injustice, the environment, immigration issues) are no longer our pursuit or assignment. Do we ignore these things? No; we are aware of them and we certainly seek to help the oppressed when we can. But our Lord’s Commission to His Church is clear: preach the Gospel to every creature; make disciples; worship Him in spirit and in truth; pray without ceasing; cast out devils; feed the hungry; clothe the naked; visit the prisoners; love and forgive others; prepare for the Lord’s appearing. We are now occupied with a HEAVENLY COUNTRY; our allegiance is not found in the earthly realm; our loyalty is not given to that which is passing away; see Hebrews 11:8-16. The kingdoms of this world are all coming down; every man-made kingdom is crumbling at the present time.

The Lord told Abraham to FORSAKE ALL, to leave everything to follow Him, including his allegiance to the country of his native birth; see Genesis 12:1. Disciples are “Abraham’s seed”; his life demonstrates the complete separation that is necessary to be called “a friend of God”; James 2:23. Jesus tells His disciples that we must love Him more than anything and anyone. If we do not carry our cross, we cannot be His disciple; this is “death” to my own preferences, my loyalties, my own pursuits, my own life. He said that no man can serve two masters; Luke 14:26; 16:13. (Is your nation, your political views, your possessions or any person a “master” over you?). The scriptures remind us that our allegiance must not be to men, to their denominations or to their “parties”; 1 Corinthians 3:3-5. The scriptures reveal that God’s allegiance is not to any “party, tribe or faction” even during times of war; see Joshua 5:13-14.

Jesus never entered into a political debate with anyone; He did not attempt to sway people’s political persuasion or change the society of that day. He spoke of another Kingdom. His allegiance was to His Father, His heavenly Authority, which allowed Him to remain focused upon His assignment: to give His life as a ransom for many, through the sacrifice of the Cross. Jesus said My Kingdom is not of this world (Greek word “kosmos”: present world order); John 18:36. Jesus and the early Church all lived under an earthly oppression from the Romans. The Sanhedrin, the Pharisees, Agrippa, Festus and Caesar were all corrupt, ungodly leaders. But Jesus never told His disciples to devote their energies toward reforming their system of unrighteousness; He never instructed His Church to “overthrow” a wicked world order in an attempt to usher in a “Golden Age”. When Jesus returns with His saints at His Second Coming, He will deal with the rebellious and establish His Millennial Kingdom.

We are presently in the Gospel Age of Grace. While it is true we are “salt and light” in the Earth, Matthew 5:13-14, and our present influence (along with the Restrainer) has hindered the full expression of evil, our biblical mandate does not include “fixing

Babylon". God says that Babylon is "fallen"; Revelation 14:8; 18:2, it is coming down. Religious man's feeble attempts to "transform the culture" or "take over" the systems of government by populating them with Christians is futile. Jesus did not commission us to "solve" man's dilemmas by building a kingdom through a structured church system with "man-made techniques" to advance the Gospel. An allegiance to the faulty thinking of "dominionism", a "kingdom now" mentality, or an "emerging, inclusive faith movement" reveals the strength of the flesh. Programs and devices of men cannot change the condition of fallen humanity or save sinners. Only the new birth, John 3:3, initiated by the Holy Spirit through an encounter with the living Christ, is the only means by which a man is transformed. Attempting to "convert society" through human ability, and the efforts of men, however noble they may be, cannot "usher in" God's Kingdom. Jesus told us that His Kingdom is NOT of this world; if it were, then His servants would fight for Him; John 18:36. At present, God's Kingdom does not come with observation (visibly); it is WITHIN US, established in the heart of an individual; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 17:20-21. Jesus said: "I pray for them (His disciples); I PRAY NOT FOR THE WORLD but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine"; John 17:9.

It is critical that we do not pray or labor from the perspective of "human sympathy" (which pleads for immediate relief for people from suffering and affliction), but from the perspective of "divine compassion" (which is true mercy, seeing the bigger picture, with God's ultimate purpose to bring lost humanity to its knees). Our Father does not willingly afflict the sons of men; Lamentations 3:33, but He knows how to deliver us from our afflictions; Psalm 34:19. Our assignment is not to attempt to spare humanity from its suffering and afflictions which arise from living in a fallen world; these things can and do serve a purpose; see Psalm 119:67; Hebrews 5:8. We can become "sidetracked" in our endeavor to pursue "issues" which cause pain to humanity. There is a great need for God's people to hear His voice, to have His perspective, to understand His timing and His ways. Psalm 103:7 tells us "He (the Lord) made known His WAYS to Moses (His friend and deliverer; Exodus 33:11), His ACTS unto the children of Israel (the nation who professed faith in God). There are two basic elements that the enemy is utilizing as an "all out assault" against God's people:

1. DECEPTION – in many forms (within the church and without)
2. DISTRACTIONS – designed to turn us from fulfilling the Great Commission, causing us to pursue the things of the world and the "issues of men" instead

The preaching of the cross and obedience to its message is foolishness to the natural mind. But it is wisdom on the part of God – a single pursuit, a separation from other "allegiances" for one end: to be raised with Him, to be a partaker of the restoration of all things! All creation is groaning, waiting for God's sons to be manifested; Romans 8:19-22. What mercy on God's part; what love on the part of those who choose to forsake all other allegiances to be loyal to Him alone. Will we pass the test of "loyalties"? May God give us the grace to forsake all to obtain Him. "...for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ"; Matthew 23:8-10.

Terri Hill

