

Sermon 193c: The Kingdom of God: Part Two

Today we want to continue our look at the kingdom of God from figure 2. We will look at the development of the relationship of cultus to culture. Or the relationship between Church and state.

1. Creation: When God created Adam and Eve, we see that there was a fundamental unity between religion (cultus) and everyday life and business (culture). In fact the one defined the other. All things were to be subdued in obedience to God's command, and for His glory (Gen 1:28). This command to go forth and multiply and subdue the earth is also known as the 'cultural mandate'. We have in seed here the developments of all the sciences, the arts, civilization, agriculture, etc. However, the reality of this being done under God and unto God went unrealised due to the fall. Adam was the king set up by God over a piece of land, and it was his job to execute justice. We see in Gen. 2:15-16 that Adam was given the responsibility of 'tending and keeping', this is the way the priestly activity in the tabernacle was described Num. 3:7-8. He was to work and to preserve the purity of the garden as the priests did the tabernacle. When the serpent came to tempt Adam's bride he should have laid down his life to attack the enemy, but instead exposed her to death and didn't die for her. When satan came to challenge the purity of the garden and Adam failed as the king to execute justice, as the priest to preserve the purity, and the prophet to bring the truth and the rebuking word of judgement to bear, he sinned. In Eden the laws of God were the laws of the land. All sinners must die, for there is to be no sin in the Garden in the presence of God. Adam like King Henry the VIII was in fact the head of church and state. There was no separation of church and state, there was bible in schools, the ten commandments hung in every court room, and everyone swore on the bible to tell the truth.

2. The fall: After the fall we witness a surprising development. The first surprise is that God did not wipe out the human race in judgement, and made the promise to save in Genesis 3:15. The continuation of life and all its gifts is by God's common grace. But the other unexpected development is the development of culture in the ungodly line of Cain. Genesis 4:19-22 (ESV) "And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. [20] Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. [21] His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. [22] Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah." We see here evidence of God's common grace in the development of culture through the ungodly line of Cain. We see the father of the nomadic herdsmen who would have perfected the science of animal husbandry; we see the father of music; and father of metal workers. The three world's of agriculture, art, and engineering. In the grace of God, even the ungodly were made to prosper and to fulfil in part the will of God in subduing the world. Exploring and expressing all the potential that He had put there as a testimony to His own glory. This is in fact the true interpretation of 'secular' history. It is not a credit to the ability of fallen man; a monument to his ingenuity and steadfastness. Rather it is a testimony to the common grace of God who will see the cultural mandate fulfilled despite the religious allegiances of those He uses. Here is an excerpt from Calvin's sermon on Genesis 4:20:

'I, however, understand Moses to have spoken expressly concerning these arts, as having been invented in the family of Cain, for the purpose of showing that he was not so accursed by the Lord but that he would still scatter some excellent gifts among his posterity; for it is probable, that the genius of others was in the meantime not inactive; but that there were, among the sons of Adam, industrious and skillful men, who exercised their diligence in the invention and cultivation of arts. Moses, however, expressly celebrates the remaining benediction of God on that race, which otherwise would have been deemed void and barren of all good. Let us then know, that the sons of Cain, though deprived of the Spirit of

regeneration, were yet endued with gifts of no despicable kind; just as the experience of all ages teaches us how widely the rays of divine light have shone on unbelieving nations, for the benefit of the present life; and we see, at the present time, that the excellent gifts of the Spirit are diffused through the whole human race. Moreover, the liberal arts and sciences have descended to us from the heathen. We are, indeed, compelled to acknowledge that we have received astronomy, and the other parts of philosophy, medicines and the order of civil government, from them. Nor is it to be doubted, that God has thus liberally enriched them with excellent favors that their impiety might have the less excuse. But, while we admire the riches of his favor which he has bestowed on them, let us still value far more highly that grace of regeneration with which he peculiarly sanctifies his elect unto himself.' Calvin, Gen 4:20.

Governments arose at this time as a gift of God and they were not required to kill anyone who did not worship God but were appointed as a restraint upon the effects of sin in society and to preserve peace. Necessarily on account of the pervasiveness of sin and the mixed group of believers and unbelievers who live under governments, the nature of government changed after the fall. So believers and unbelievers can work in society and government side by side.

3. The flood: In the flood we see no significant change in this dual activity of God in special and common grace. In fact in the Noahic covenant we see God promise that the world, the stage where sinners live in rebellion against Him will continue to be sustained (Gen 9:8-16). Neither was there a reuniting of these activities after the Tower of Babel, or in the call and covenant of Abraham. We understand the giving of the death penalty to be a creation wide law that all governments are called upon to do, but there is no exclusive government set up by God to perform this.

4. Sinai: After the 400 years of slavery of Israel in Egypt God brought about a change. He instituted a theocracy. He made a replica of the Garden of Eden where God and man would dwell together in the land of Israel. A place where some of the theocratic realities of what Eden should have become were realized. The Laws given that made up the theocracy were given to uphold the edenic/new heavens and new earth standards. The laws were to show it to be a type of miniature heaven, where all things unholy were punished, covered, or paid for. Here Church and state were united, the weekly Sabbath was upheld with the death penalty; homosexuals, idolaters, blasphemers, adulterers, etc were put to death. The land had to be constantly cleansed because of the people's sin, for God was there. Even faeces had to be buried for God was walking through the camp. And there were a number of laws given to model and reinforce the idea of being holy, like: not planting two types of seed in a field, not mixing the fibres of the clothes one wears, etc. Here culture and cultus were one, Church and state one, special and common grace joined in the sustaining of this religious state.

It was for this reason that we see holy war waged when Joshua was securing the land. The land was God's holy land, and it needed to be purged of the unholy. These idolatrous nations had to be punished with a 'Day of the Lord' type judgement. The armies of Israel were God's rod of judgement for purging the land, and bringing in judgement for these nations. This continued on through the time of the Judges and Kings. It was also during this time that the imprecatory psalms were appropriately found on the lips of Israel's king. For he stood as a type of Christ's final judgement.

We said last week that on account of the covenantal arrangement to ordinary way in which common grace was administered was on hold in Israel. Instead of the good and evil receiving good, you received bad for sin, and blessing for obedience. This is what helps us

make sense of Psalm 91:5-8, 'You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.' Also Psalm 38:1-3, 'O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath! For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin.' In the NT there is some connection between sin and sickness, 1 Cor. 11:29-32, James 5:15-16. However there is no a direct cause and effect correlation as there would have been under the Mosaic covenant. We cannot claim psalm 91, nor expect that every sickness is caused by sin as psalm 38 implies either. Our relation to God is governed by our adoption in Christ and His Fatherly purposes which include allowing us to be sick.

5. Exile: However, Israel could not circumcise their own hearts and fulfil the law they were called to. So God acted in judgement against their idolatry and immorality. He caused the Northern tribes to be exiled by Assyria, and the 2 Southern tribes by Babylon. How now was the theocracy to function? The temple had been abandoned by God (Ezekiel 10), and finally destroyed. The land was inhabited by foreigners. God began to prepare them to think about being the people of God differently, and told them to pray for the peace of the land that they were in, to marry, build houses, and seek Babylon's peace and prosperity (Jeremiah 29:4-9), in anticipation of a return to the land. This exile and resettling of the Jews in the various nations around Israel resulted in the diaspora/dispersion. The Jews were not to take up swords like Joshua and cleanse the land, they had to live as exiles. They were not to try and set up a godly government, but submit to the one they were under. This exile aspect of the life of the people of God becomes the paradigm that the apostles apply to the church.

6. Christ: When Jesus comes as Messiah Israel is under Roman domination, and the people of Israel are anticipating a Messiah who will annihilate Rome and bring in the Messianic Kingdom spoken of in the prophets through military conquest. Christ however, surprised even the most informed Jews (John the Baptist) announcing a time of repentance for the people, a day of salvation, that so far has lasted nearly 2000 years. When Jesus was questioned about the Jews and their relationship to Caesar. Jesus did not call them to arms to re-establish the theocracy as it was in Joshua's or David's day, but told them to pay their taxes to Caesar, as well as worship God, laying the foundation for the NT understanding of dual citizenship.

Pentecost: After Pentecost we do not see the arrival of the New Heavens and the New Earth, but rather a delay in their arrival until Jesus second coming in glory. Until then the Church is sent out empowered as a missionary Church taking the Gospel to all nations. Everywhere we go we recognise the governments that God has put in place by His common grace, pay our taxes, all the while recognizing our citizenship is above (Phil 3:20).

Romans 13:1-7 (ESV) "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. [2] Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. [3] For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, [4] for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. [5] Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. [6] For the same reason you also pay taxes,

for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. [7] Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.”

In fact Peter thinks of the Church as the diaspora, ‘the elect exiles of the dispersion’. James says, ‘To the twelve tribes in the dispersion.’ Neither Jesus, nor Paul nor any of the other disciples gave us a blueprint for reinstating a theocracy. But affirmed the idea of a dual citizenship as we wait for Christ to bring in the Kingdom. Michael S. Horton puts it as follows:

‘In its present phase, the Kingdom is like its King before He was raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of the Father. It can only properly appear weak and foolish to the world, even though this kingdom is more extensive in its global reach and more intensive in its redemptive power than any earthly empire in history. In the old covenant the kingdom was typologically concentrated in the outward glory of Israel’s cultic and civil structures, but during ‘this present evil age’ its glory is hidden under the cross. It claims hearts, not geopolitical lands. It brings in new birth (Jn 3:3-7) from the future reign of the Spirit and as a prolepsis of the consummation that the ‘Lord and giver of life’ will bring in ‘the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.’¹

There are those who have a different view of our purpose. Keith Matheison has given us two distinct pictures of Israel, which one do you think is that one that portrays the church until Christ’s return? Is the Church to be seen as Israel conquering the promised land and killing and subduing the Canaanites creating a mini-paradise where God’s rules are kept? Or is the Church to see itself as exiles who are no longer attached to a piece of land waiting for God to return them to the place where He reigns in glory? We are strangers, citizens of heaven, exiles, of the twelve tribes of the dispersion. It is not our goal to transform culture through political manoeuvres but rather to build an unseen kingdom by the power of the Gospel, the church.

Second Coming: At the second coming we will see once again the marriage between Church and State with King Jesus ruling. Then the Kingdom of God will be a kingdom of glory, but for now, as Horton puts it, ‘This also means that, for now, the society that Christ’s reign is creating is completely distinct from the secular societies, nations, and ethnic groups to which we also belong in our temporal citizenship. Unlike the old covenant society, with its civil laws, a godly commonwealth has no blueprints except for the instructions Christ and His apostles gave to the Church for its faith and practice.’²

Conclusion: Knowing what time it is when addressing this question of church and state, special and common grace, cultus and culture we find a lot of clarity and direction. Here are a few insights we take away from such an excursion.

We see why Holy war is wrong now. We can see that it was a type for the final day of judgment, and is what Meredith G. Kline calls, ‘intrusion ethics’³. The imprecatory psalms then are not sung by us, but by those in the intermediate state, and Christ who will finally bring in the final judgement.

¹ Michael S. Horton, *The Christian Faith, a systematic theology for pilgrims on the way*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), 524-5.

² Ibid., 544.

³ Ibid., 959.

We see our relationship to the government clearly, not trying to make the kingdom of God present as a theocracy with a marriage of church and state. We reject liberation theologies emphasis attempts to turn us from our task of taking the Gospel to all nations, and domesticating our efforts and concerns to mere political ones.

We understand our role as salt and light in the midst of this generation, not to be one of triumphalism where we seek to dominate this world's structures in a type of theocratic regime, but rather as a counter-culture, as a prophetic witness, and the paradoxical victory of martyrdom.

We see God's work in common grace in culture and not only in cultus. And so we do not have an Amish perspective on what God has accomplished by common grace in culture. We can praise many things as good to the glory of God.

We accept God's providence in establishing 'Christian' governments from time to time to hinder the progress of evil as well as other purposes. However, if in His providence these 'Christian' governments are overturned, we do not think that the kingdom of God is being overrun, for Christ will consummate the kingdom at His second coming, it does not subsist in political structures nor do we build it with our political efforts.

We see that although the creation mandate was given to all image bearers in the beginning, the Great commission was given only to the Church. Therefore we do not accept national churches, or government driven gospel preaching.