

The Kingdom-Centered Church

Introduction

Jesus only used the word “church” three times in His earthly ministry, all recorded in the kingdom-focused book of Matthew. The word “kingdom,” however, is found fifty-four times in Matthew alone.

Yet, surprisingly, we often hear more about the church than the kingdom. We “plant churches” rather than promoting the kingdom. Our seminaries teach our future leaders how to do church rather than how to be about the kingdom.

We ought to focus on both the kingdom and the church because both are interconnected. We can’t have church without the kingdom, and the kingdom carries out its agenda through the church.

1) The Church belongs to Jesus.

It is his idea and his creation.

Matthew 16:13-19 “Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” **14** And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” **15** He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” **16** Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” **17** And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. **18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. **19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

2) Before He could build his church he had to overthrow the domain of darkness and bring us into his Kingdom, under his domain.

A kingdom is the domain of a particular king.

- a) Colossians 1:12-14 give “... thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. **13** He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”.

- b) He did this on the Cross: Colossians 1:19-20 “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

Ephesians 1:19-23 “I want you to see the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might **20** that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, **21** far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. **22** And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, **23** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

- c) God raised him from death and set him on a throne in the highest of heaven. Now, the risen Jesus has the ruler-ship of the entire universe. Everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power is exempt from his rule.
- d) And not just for the time being, but *forever*. He is in charge of it all, he has the final word on everything.
- e) At the center of all this is His Church. The church is at the very center of God’s agenda in this day!
- i) For the church is Christ’s body, in which He speaks and acts.
 - ii) The church is the “fullness of him who fills all in all”.
- (1) Jesus wants to fill everything on the earth with the reality of his presence.
 - (2) The church is here to fill in the blanks

The Church is God’s Kingdom Institution today!

The church is to be the visible manifestation of the kingdom that impacts history.

Our society is not changing today because the church has settled for buildings and programs instead of accessing the authority of the kingdom and the power of the Holy Spirit.

We’ve had church, but we haven’t had transformation.

The Kingdom-Centered Church

1) The Kingdom-Centered Church Has a Unified Purpose

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, He has a purpose for you here on earth that is much bigger than your individual salvation.

We as the church have been called to unify ourselves around His Purpose.

a) We are called to a unified purpose... One New Man

i) A revelation of his purpose in the church is found in Ephesians

(1) Ephesians 1:4,5 “he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.”

(2) Ephesians 1:9,10 “making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ.”

Verse 10 “...as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. Kingdom of heaven manifesting as one kingdom on earth.”

The Ultimate Purpose is Kingdom Unity under the headship of Jesus

(3) Ephesians 1:11 “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.”

ii) The Purpose of God’s will in the church is the uniting of all of his redeemed people under the headship of Jesus Christ.

(1) “For He has a name that is above every name and God has put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head of His church.” (Ephesians 1:22)

(2) The church has a unified purpose of revealing and accessing what’s in heaven and bring it into a reality on earth... now!

This is our right... our inheritance.

iii) This is why being a BOX CHURCH will never do!

(1) Jesus came to tear down dividing walls of hostility!

Ephesians 2:13-16 "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility."

"**15** that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, **16** and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."

(2) The Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians could not box another out. The Holy Spirit would not allow them to remain hostile toward one another

b) The Church is called to act as a Model Community demonstrating Kingdom Unity

i) "Although there is war in the world, there ought to be peace in the church and prayer for peace by the church." (1 Timothy 2: 1– 2).

ii) "Although there is poverty in the world, there ought to be voluntary sharing with the goal of meeting existing needs in the church." (Acts 2: 44– 45).

iii) Although there is racism, classism, and sexism in the world, there ought to be authentic oneness in the church.

(1) Colossians 3:11 "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all."

(2) Gal 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

When the church unified around his purposes then it will really become an alternative model for the world, a community functioning under the rule of God in His kingdom on earth and the Gates of Hell will give up the lost.

2) The Kingdom-Centered Church Has Access to Unlimited Power

a) A kingdom-centered church operates with full access to supreme authority and power.

Jesus said in Matthew 16: 19: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

i) What do you do with keys? You gain access.

- (1) Yet why are we not experiencing this power and authority in the church today?
Because we are not operating in the way Jesus designed His church to function.
 - (2) As Tony Evans says “We are operating according to “churchdom” instead of the kingdom.”
 - (3) Therefore, we are trying to use our own church keys to unlock kingdom doors, and finding that they don’t open much of anything at all.
- ii) The keys Jesus is giving the church are the only keys that will work. These are not program keys, ministry keys, sermon keys, or song keys. These are the keys that belong to the kingdom. So if our churches are not kingdom-minded— if we have failed to comprehend, let alone adopt, a kingdom theology, ideology, and methodology— we will not be able to open heaven’s doors.
- b) Jesus is saying that the church, and only the church, has legal access to the kingdom of God and its authority. In other words, only the church (and those who are attached to it) has access to the rule of God in history. Only the church has the authority to call down heaven to address issues on earth. Only the church can open the door of eternity to access and operate the authority of heaven’s agenda in a hellish world.
- c) The Holy Spirit provides the Power
- i) It is impossible for the church to be the church as God intended apart from the dynamic ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “Apart from Me you can do nothing.” (John 15: 5), “and Jesus is the One who sent the Spirit to indwell and empower the church.”
- (1) Just before His ascension, Jesus was teaching His disciples about the kingdom for 40 days (Acts 1: 3, 6). In this context of discussing God’s rule, Jesus made a great promise to them: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1: 8). This promise was fulfilled just a matter of days later at the birth of the church in Acts 2.
 - (2) Just as electricity provides power for the kingdom of your home, the Holy Spirit provides power for God’s kingdom to function in our midst as long as the church is operating in accordance with kingdom principles.
- ii) Jesus knew they were lacking in power. And even though He had been their Bible teacher, He told them that they wouldn’t have power until the Holy Spirit came upon them.

- (1) What we are missing in the church today is not programs and information. We are missing the Spirit's power that comes from His filling.
- (2) Sound Bible teaching is critically important for imparting truth, and helping us discern the true from the false when it comes to the claims people make in the spiritual realm. But Bible teaching by itself cannot substitute for the Holy Spirit's presence. Teaching is simply a prelude to the supernatural.
- iii) When Jesus' promise of the Spirit's coming was fulfilled, something supernatural from heaven occurred.
 - (1) The rest of the book of Acts is a proof of Jesus' statement to the disciples that they would receive power when, and only when, the Holy Spirit came and filled them.
 - (2) Acts is about what the local church looks like when the Holy Spirit takes over.

3) The Kingdom- Centered Church is Committed to an Undivided Partnership

Ultimately the purpose of the kingdom is all about people. The reason why we need the power of the Holy Spirit is because of people. People need the Lord, and people need the transformation that only the power of the Spirit can accomplish.

- a) One People
- b) One in Practice
 - i) Undivided people are not contentious (1Cor 11:16-18)
- c) One Race
 - i) We Are One

Ephesians 2:13-16

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. **15** that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, **16** and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."