

The Kingdom of God

Lesson 5: It's Constitution and Laws

If you desire to understand the future consummation of the Kingdom, you must first understand the Kingdom in history. Several of the biggest issues of our day are addressed in the mediatorial kingdom established at Sinai. Separation of Church and State, Personal freedom from excessive central government, the problem of the divisions caused by various political parties, freedom of religious expression

I. Kingdom Framework

- a. The Mosaic Code is an indivisible unity in which the **plan of God** for the governance of man is laid out in comprehensive detail.
- b. **It is not** Moses' idea of how he would govern the nation of Israel, but rather, it is God's sovereign plan in which he instructs Moses and the nation of Israel precisely how the mediatorial kingdom should be set up and ruled through Moses.
- c. As outlined in God's plan, the **total needs** of man fall within three general categories:
 1. Since man is a **religious** being, he needs to be guided in his spiritual and religious practices in his relation to God;
 2. Since man is a **social and political** being, he needs guidance in the details affecting such relationships.
 3. Since man is a **moral** being, he needs to be informed as to the basic principles of right and wrong (the Law);
- d. Under close scrutiny, God's plan for governance in the Theocratic Kingdom provides some significant **insight** into the mind of God through the things that He approves and forbids in these three areas of human need.
- e. Further, as our understanding of this Theocratic Kingdom history unfolds we have a better understanding of some of the issues **currently** being debated in our own country and world.

II. A Spiritual Kingdom

- a. Many expositors looking at the **outward** manifestations of the religious practice of the Jews, fail to see the spiritual nature of the Old Testament mediatorial reign of Moses and conclude that a spiritual kingdom did not come until Christ's ministry.
- b. However, the spiritual nature of the Old Testament kingdom is easily demonstrated when one considers that, at its heart any relationship between humans and the God of the Bible is first and foremost, **spiritual in nature**. John 4:24 *God is a Spirit : and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. KJV*
- c. Israel had no strong political center; the unifying bond between the tribes was their **common** allegiance to Jehovah. That Jehovah was Israel's King, was deeply rooted and strongly held belief up until the time of King Saul. 1 Sam 8:7 *And the Lord said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me , that I should not reign over them. KJV*
- d. The entire system of sacrifice as established in the kingdom-covenant at Sinai, had as its central purpose the maintenance of spiritual fellowship between the people and God through the **atonement** of their sins. Lev 4:20 *And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them. KJV*
- e. Furthermore, the law of the kingdom was not concerned merely with external **do's and don'ts**, but penetrated deeper to the hearts of individuals in their relationship to God. Deut 6:5-6 *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: KJV*
- f. While later generations of Israel **corrupted** the essentially spiritual nature of the law, the New Testament points out that the Law given on Sinai was spiritual in character. Rom 7:14 *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. KJV*
- g. This spiritual relation of Israel to God was the foundation of all other relations existing in the historical kingdom and spilled over into all other areas of life and practice. This kind of "true spirituality" is not what you do; it is who **you are**.

III. The Practice of Religion

- a. Israel as a mediatorial nation was a religious state. The tie between the civil and the religious aspects of the government was so vital that neither could exist without the other. Strictly speaking however, ancient Judaism is not a Religion but a **way of life**.
- b. The priesthood, the ritual worship, the place of assembly; all were supported by the state and **enforced** by its authority.
- c. Moses appointed the priesthood in his capacity as the head of the mediatorial state and was acting directly under the explicit directions given by Jehovah himself. The priestly function was not to be **interfered** with by any civil ruler. Num 3:10 *Appoint Aaron and his sons to serve as priests; anyone else who approaches the sanctuary must be put to death." NIV*
- d. On the other hand, priests had no civil authority and the union of civil and priestly function in one man is apparently viewed as a dangerous system as long as the rule of God is mediated through **sinful men**.
- e. This **combination** of civil and religious authority in one person will become the ideal when the one mediating the kingdom is the sinless Son of God who is both man and God. And, who will be Prophet Priest and King.
- f. The priests and Levites were to own **nothing**. This was done to guard against a rich priestly caste caught up with the ownership of lands and other properties. In Israel they were given something better. Num 18:20 *The LORD said to Aaron, "You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites. NIV*
- g. Under the theocratic government there could be no such thing as freedom of religion as we understand that notion. Since the One True God was Israel's King, the worship of any other god was forbidden under penalty of **death**. Deut 13:5 *And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee. KJV*
- h. A union between the church and state will only be safe when inaugurated and controlled by the one true God in a kingdom of His own over which He **personally** presides. Zech 14:9;16-18 *The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. 17 If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. NIV*

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IV. The Political Aspects

- a. From its beginning at Sinai the historic kingdom of Israel was truly an organized **system** of government with a definite polity both internally in the persons of the elders and externally in the person of Moses.
- b. The **unifying** feature of this political system was the mediatorial ruler through whom Jehovah ruled the nation. Moses, as was the case of all his successors, was neither a dictator nor a monarch. He was strictly limited to executive and judicial functions.
- c. The absence of a strong, central political organization had two **beneficial** effects.
 1. It left room for the widest possible freedom among the people to govern themselves at the local level and therefore led to a deep feeling of political **liberty** which was unknown among any other neighboring nation.
 2. It tended to prevent the rise of policies which might lead to a struggle to attain the status of a world empire. The nation was held together and unified by the immediate **presence** of Jehovah. Ex 33:16 *How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" NIV*
- d. **Nowhere** else in the history of government do we find any comparable solution to the problem of balance between national strength on the one hand and personal and political liberty on the other.
- e. Externally, in relation to other nations, Israel was promised a place of both political and economic supremacy. This supremacy was not based upon any political system nor upon a conquering army, but rather upon **obedience** to God's will. Deut 15:5-6 *if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. 6 For the LORD your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you. NIV*
- f. With regard to **alliances** with other nations, Israel was warned against this action. Such alliances later lead them into religious and moral decline, dependence upon men rather than God, entanglements in wars and a loss of national security. Isa 30:1-2 *"Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin; 2 who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh's protection, to Egypt's shade for refuge. NIV*
- g. In taking over the Promised Land Israel carried out divinely ordered executions in which the army of Israel served only as the **instrument**. The real leader in all these expeditions was Jehovah Himself. Ex 23:20-23 *"See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. 21 Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. 22 If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. NIV*
- h. These conquests are not Israel's quarrel, in which they are to ask for divine **assistance**, but rather, the battle is the Lord's and Israel and Joshua are but a division in His host. Ps 44:2-4 *With your hand you drove out the nations and planted our fathers; you crushed the peoples and made our fathers flourish. 3 It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them. 4 You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob. NIV*
- i. The mediatorial nation of Israel was to model to the nations of the world a moral and spiritual way of life. But this way of life could only be carried out if Israel maintained its **separation** in both the religious and political spheres.
- j. The chosen nation status of Israel was never intended as an **end in itself**, but rather a means to a vastly greater end which envisioned the good of all nations of men. Ps 72:17 *His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. KJV*

V. Application

- a. As the Jews have historically demonstrated it is all too easy to fall into "doing rather than being" when it comes to one's spiritual relationship with God.
- b. How do you recognize when you are lapsing into a "doing rather than being" mindset with the Lord in the following areas of your life?
 - Bible time
 - Prayer
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