
THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

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- Gen 1.27-28 God handed over the government of the earth to a viceroy (representative of the King): Adam.
Gen 3 He failed because he surrendered to Satan.
Sinful humanity then rebelled against God.
- Psa 2.1-3 Psalm 2 describes the nations and those who govern as uniting against the Lord and his Anointed One (Christ)
- Psa 2.4-5 God laughs at them, and then speaks to them in his fury.
- Sal. 2.5-8 According to this messianic Psalm, interpreted by Paul in the synagogue in Pisidian
Acts 13.32-34 Antioch, the Father, on the day of Christ's resurrection, says to him: *"You are my Son, today I have become your Father; ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession"*.
The Son, always obedient to the Father, requests the nations as his inheritance.
- Phil 2.9-11 The Father exalts him to the highest place,
Eph 1.20-22 above all power and dominion,
Matt 28.18 and gives him all authority in heaven and earth.
Psa 110.1 And then, seating him on the throne to his right, he says to him: *Sit on my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.*
Acts 2.34-35

OUR MISSION IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF CHRIST

Jesus also said to his disciples that in their mission in the earth they were to follow his example:

- John 20.21 - *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you"*.
Jn 8.12 / Matt 5.14 - *"I am the light of the world" - "You are the light of the world"*
Matt 20.25-28 - *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"*.
Isa. 53.7 / - *"He was led like a lamb to the slaughter" - "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves"*.
Matt 10.16
John 18.36 - *"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place"*.
Eph 6.12 - *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"*.

WHAT THE LORD SAID THAT WE ARE

- Matt 5.13-14 - The salt of the earth and the light of the world.
- Matt 5.16 - A city set on a hill that cannot be hidden; so that men who see our good words might glorify God.
- 1 Tim 3.15 - The church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

WHAT THE LORD EXPLICITLY COMMANDED US TO DO

- Matt 6.10 - Pray each day that his kingdom come, and his will be done in the earth as it is done in heaven.
- Matt 22.37-39 - Love God with all our being, and our neighbor as ourselves.
- Matt 28.20 - As his disciples we are to keep all his commandments. We should put into practice everything he taught us in the Sermon on the Mount (“Didache of the kingdom”).
- Matt 7.24
- Mar 16.15-16
- Matt 28.18-20 - Go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone; make disciples of all people of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to keep all his commandments.
- John 17.21-23
- 1 Tim 2.1-4 - He prayed that we might be one, so that the world might believe...
 - Pray for all men and for those in eminence.

WHAT THE LORD PROMISED TO DO IN THE WORLD IN THE FINAL DAYS

- Joel 2.28-32 - Pour out his Spirit upon all flesh with great signs.
- Eph 4.11-16 - Raise up apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, until the church reach its fullness in unity, holiness and quantity.
- Eph 2.7 - Reveal in the coming ages the abundant riches of his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- Matt 24.14 - Worldwide evangelization with the gospel of the kingdom prior to his coming...
- Hab 2.14 - Fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory.
- Rom 11.15 y 25-26 - A worldwide revival through the conversion of Israel.
- Heb 12.26-28 - The shaking and removal of all things moveable in earth and heaven, so that that which is immovable might remain: the kingdom of God.

OBSERVATION

- John 6.15 - At no time do we observe in Christ’s mission any attempt to be a political ruler. When others wanted to make him king, he refused and fled.
 - At no time did he give a single explicit commandment to his disciples that they as the church should seek to conquer the nations in a political career or by their own might. (Although I understand that any particular disciple in his condition as a citizen could become politically involved – in the best sense of the word – and occupy a function of government in the world.)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE CHURCH

We should never confuse the kingdom of God with the church.
The church is under the kingdom of God, but it is not the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is his government, his reign.
In himself God has all knowledge and power; the church does not.
God is perfect, absolute and infallible; not the church.
The church is made up of men with flaws and imperfections, in the process of being perfected.

Matt 18.15-18 Jesus Christ delegated many things to his disciples, even the responsibility to excommunicate a member of the church who does not repent of his sin; but he never delegated to anyone the function of being head of the church, or the Lord or history. The one who continues to be seated on the throne is the Lamb, and not the church. He is alive and continues to be the only head of the church and Lord of the universe.

Rom 13.1-7 God has the authority to raise up and put down kings; not the church.

Psa 24.1 God is the owner of the earth and its fullness; not the church.

THE CONQUEST OF THE NATIONS

Though he was a king, Jesus Christ became a slave. Though he owned the universe he became poor. Though he was God, he emptied himself. He came to serve, to love, to forgive and to give his life. Though he was omnipotent he became weak, vulnerable, meek. He allowed himself to be killed. He came to show that the cross is the pathway to universal conquest; that evil is to be conquered with good, hate with love. He came to teach us that the meek will inherit the earth. The Father is pleased to give the kingdom to those who are poor in spirit; to show to children the mysteries of the kingdom.

Jesus showed to the church of all ages that in order to effectively fulfill his mission in the earth, she should follow the model of Servant, in the spirit of the Lamb.

THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST CENTURIES

This is the path the church followed during the first three centuries of her history. It was a persecuted church, with hundreds of thousands of martyrs; a poor church, yet powerful in God. A church that grew and grew, and nothing and no one could detain its growth.

They were not evangelicals nor Roman catholics, but true disciples. Under persecution, only the authentic Christians prevailed.

With the conversion of Constantine (in the year 311) the church experimented, apparently, her greatest victory, and at the same time, the beginning of her greatest deterioration.

The great emperor of Rome, in his desire to help the church, did what he never should have done:

- He imposed Christianity as the official religion of the empire.
- He transformed the pagan temples into Christian temples.
- He imposed by decree that every Roman citizen should be baptized and become Christian.
- He dignified the bishops to the hierarchy of princes.

Although this appeared to be a great advance of the church in history, it became its greatest loss. The church lost her simplicity, humility, her dependence on God and, consequently, her spirituality.

The worldly values and hierarchies were progressively installed in the church: power, honor, fame, money, convenience, dominion... Some leaders of the church sincerely believed that the kingdoms of this world had become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ...

Evidently, the church, accustomed to over 280 years of being poor and persecuted, was not prepared to reign. Instead of a lamb, it became a lion, and later began to eat up the other animals in the forest.

THE CHURCH IN OUR DAYS:

“Those who ignore their history are condemned to repeat the same errors”

It would seem that the Catholic Church understands history better than the evangelical church. It would seem that they have learned from the errors of the past, and today they have a clearer posture concerning the church and society than many evangelicals.

Traditional and historical evangelicals have been rather active at the level of theological reflection on social and political subjects, although due to their limited spiritual vitality and slight numerical growth they have not been able to make a significant contribution in a practical sense.

The churches that have a dispensationalist or fundamentalist orientation have not developed a missiological proposal for social transformation due to their eschatological focus, (I would also call it an “escapological” focus).

Many of the neo-Pentecostal or charismatic churches under the influence of materialism and prosperity theology, have incorporated the world’s values: fame, power, money, luxury, success, numbers, status, position, a sumptuous and grandiose approach. In countries where the number of evangelicals has grown considerably, there are pastors who present themselves as candidates for the presidency of the nation, or other important roles without previously developing a socio-economic proposal in accord with the values of the kingdom of God. And in the cases where they reach the seat of power, they use the formulas that have already been shown to be a failure, whether they are of capitalistic or socialistic tendencies.

Second part: THE CHALLENGE AHEAD OF US

I suggest that, in addition to all that has been said in this apostolic consultation, we need to advance along two lines of action:

- 1) Integral and diligent obedience to the GREAT COMMISSION
- 2) ‘Ora et Labora’, i.e., Pray and work: Pray the Lord’s Prayer each day and begin – from this point forward - an INTELLECTUAL PROJECT UNDER THE LORD’S INSPIRATION in collaboration with PROJECTS FOR THE SOCIETY AND THE NATION MORE IN ACCORD WITH THE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

1 – THE GREAT COMMISSION

Matt 28:18-20

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

This was the specific command that Jesus gave to his disciples before ascending into heaven. These simple Galileans, men without much education, after being filled with the Holy Spirit, launched into this task in the midst of a world completely adverse, as regards the iron dominion of Rome, Greek philosophy, paganism, mythology and idolatry.

However, after some 250 years there were in the Roman empire vast regions in which more than half the population were followers of Jesus^{*}, to the point that the Roman emperor himself, Constantine, in the year 312 was converted and established Christianity as the official religion of the empire. We do not know whether his conversion was genuine or strategic in order to assure his remaining in power in an empire in which the number of Christians was growing greatly. Only God knows.

Returning to our central point, we ask: How did those disciples of the Lord accomplish such growth in the midst of such adverse conditions? They did not have the advantages we have today: printing press, radio, TV, automobiles, airplanes, telephones, cellular phones, computers, Internet, etc.

What did they have? **THEY HAD THE POWER OF AN ABSOLUTE CONVICTION.** They were totally convinced that **JESUS WAS THE ONLY AND THE COMPLETE SOLUTION FOR ALL MEN IN ALL NATIONS.** Empowered by that conviction, with determination and faith they launched into the task of making disciples of all nations.

Do we have the same conviction? In order to strengthen our faith and our conviction I ask the following question: **What would our country be like if all the inhabitants, from the president of the nation to the last inhabitant, should all live according to God’s will?**

I have asked the same question in different parts of the world and in the most diverse auditoriums, and the answer is always the same: **“IT WOULD BE A PARADISE.”**

^{*} *Armenian history registers that of the twelve apostles, those who reached that country with the gospel were Thaddeus and Bartholomew. Armenia was a pagan nation. By the end of the third century, more than half the population of Armenia were disciples of Christ, and under great persecution. In the year 301 the king of Armenia, Dertad II, became a Christian and established Christianity as the state religion. (Armenians boast that theirs was the first nation that accepted Christianity as their national religion).*

Could this not be the proposal that Jesus made when he taught us to pray: *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”*?

The watchword

It is basic that we give much attention to the watchword of Jesus. He did not say: ‘Go and have meetings, campaigns, encounters, temples, not even cell groups. He said: “GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES”. There is nothing wrong with having meetings, campaigns, cell groups, or building temples... We do all that and will continue to do so; they are good and useful, but we need to understand that such things are not the essence of our MISSION; for we can have meetings, campaigns, temples and cell groups... WITHOUT MAKING TRUE DISCIPLES TO JESUS CHRIST.

The solution for the nations is not to make them evangelicals, but disciples. That is the essence of the great commission.

How does Jesus define a disciple?

Luke 14.26, 27, 33

1. V.26: *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters —yes, even his own life— he cannot be my disciple”*.

Disciple is a person in whose life Jesus takes first place.

2. V.27: *“And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple”*. For Jesus, the cross means being obedient to death.

Disciple is a person willing to obey the Lord, even to the point of death.

3. V.33: *“Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple”*.

Disciple is a person who recognizes that all he has belongs to Christ: His life, his time, his body, his family, his home, his money, his goods and property, his projects, his abilities, everything.

In a practical sense, what is a disciple?

Today, a child who goes to school is called a student; in ancient times he was called a disciple. A student is one who learns. Usually, students are children. A child is docile, like soft clay; he is teachable, he can be corrected. He has the virtue of learning. He is a disciple.

What should a disciple of Jesus learn?

He should learn to live according to God’s will. This is the greatest need in today’s society. People do not know how to live. And there are no schools that teach people to live, much less to live according to God’s will. Families have failed in this basic responsibility. The Catholic church failed. Evangelicals are also failing.

JESUS CHRIST says: *“Come to me... take my yoke... learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”* (Matthew 11.28-30).

Clearly, a student, a disciple, is teachable, is meek and humble, willing to be corrected.

This is what Jesus commanded us to do in the great commission: Make disciples, baptizing them, and then teaching the disciples to keep all of the Lord's commandments and thus live according to God's will in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We have the solution. The unique and total solution for all of mankind. The world is ours, because it belongs to the Lord. All have failed, and will fail again. All the ideologies, all religions, even the evangelicals, as long as they dedicate themselves to just have meetings. In this crucial hour of history, God tells us: **GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS... I AM WITH YOU.**

2 – 'ORA ET LABORA' (Pray and work):

Pray the Lord's Prayer every day, in which we say: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. At the same time let us initiate – from now on - an **INTELLECTUAL WORK UNDER THE LORD'S INSPIRATION** in the preparation of **PROJECTS FOR THE SOCIETY AND THE NATION THAT ARE MORE IN LINE WITH THE VALUES OF GOD'S KINGDOM.**

REFLECTION:

How should we act in a country if we are a small minority? (For instance, Belgium: 0,6% evangelicals – not disciples)

- We should understand the value of a mustard seed (Matt 13.31-32).
- We should be leaven (Matt 13.33).

We should determine as our objective that all evangelicals and Catholics become disciples of Jesus.

Carlos Mraida told us that we can also read history **FROM THE FUTURE TOWARD THE PAST:**

- How should we act in a country where 30% of the inhabitants are disciples?
- How should we act if we reach 70% disciples?
- How would the labor laws, tax laws, civil and penal laws, economic norms look?
- What would the constitution be like?
- What would be the economic system?
- How would the riches be distributed? How about the involvement in the international order, the health system, local and national security? Would it be proper to impose the moral norms of the kingdom upon those who are not disciples?

In light of the current vacuum and crisis, in order to experience a true transformation of society, three things are required of those who govern:

1. Integrity >< Corruption
2. Capability, professionalism >< Ineptitude
3. A socio-economic system more in line with the principles and values of the kingdom of God.

We need to create groups for reflection and work to elaborate proposals in the following categories:

- **PROJECT FOR SOCIETY**
- **PROJECT FOR THE NATION**

- PROJECT FOR GOVERNMENT: EXECUTIVE, LEGISLATIVE AND JUDICIAL
- PROJECT FOR MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY
- PROJECT FOR WORK
- PROJECT FOR EDUCATION
- PROJECT FOR HEALTH
- PROJECT FOR HUMAN FORMATION: VALUES, CHARACTER, MORAL AND ETHICAL
- PROJECT FOR MACROECONOMICS
- PROJECT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE
- PROJECT FOR SAVINGS
- PROJECT FOR RETIREMENT
- PROJECT FOR HUMAN ENRICHMENT
- PROJECT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR ECOLOGICAL CARE AND DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS
- PROJECT FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
- PROJECT FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION
- PROJECTS FOR HONORABLE LIVING QUARTERS
- PROJECT FOR CITIZEN'S AND NATIONAL SECURITY
- ETCÉTERA...

...while we continue to pray each day: *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

An example in the history of social transformation was the result of revival in England through the ministry of John Wesley.