



Center for United States Missions

Mission Moments



May 19, 2009

Missions and the Kingdom of God

By Michael R. Ruhl

It was a moment that was more than embarrassing.

Even after eight years of biblical and theological training, plus accurate and redundant explanation in the seminary classroom, plus five years of parish ministry in Minnesota and Michigan, plus numerous sermons on the parables ... I still did not 'get it'...*the Kingdom of God*, I mean.



Like many people, I understood the *Kingdom of God* as something 'other-worldly'...perhaps even a term that described eternal life in heaven. It was not until reading the book *The Kingdom of God* by John Bright while in training for *The Bethel Bible Series* many years ago that this central Scriptural concept came to light. The expression *Basileia tou Theou* is better translated *kingship (reign, rule) of God in the hearts and lives of people on earth today*. At conversion, people are ushered into the *Kingdom of God* by the Holy Spirit. Justified by grace and through faith, *Jesus establishes his reign and rule (kingship)* in the hearts of true believers. This *Kingdom of God* is subject to the tension of the 'already and the not yet'. Salvation begins on earth at conversion, but it is not perfected until after the saints are joined with Jesus in heaven. Some refer to this dynamic tension as 'inaugurated eschatology'.

At the recent North American Mission Executives Conference in St. Louis, speaker Ed Stetzer reminded us that the *Kingdom of God* is mentioned 80 times by Jesus in the synoptic gospels, along with numerous other 'kingdom insights'. How sad that the *Kingdom of God* has been marginalized and obscured by many in the church, even though it was Jesus' obsession!

So what does all this have to do with missions and church planting? I am delighted that you asked (presumably) that question.

Our Triune God is a sending God. God sent Jesus in the incarnation to reconcile the sinful world to himself. God sent the Holy Spirit to create the church and to energize the church to accomplish the purpose of God in the world. And finally, God sends the church as an instrument of the *Kingdom of God*. God establishes his kingdom through the witness to Christ by the church, as men, women, and children enter and live under the kingship (reign and rule) of Jesus Christ, starting at conversion and perfected in eternity.

By grace, my embarrassment is over and in the past tense. The Holy Spirit has given and restored proper missional perspective. The church is not about imperialistic empire-building. The church is a means something much bigger and more significant than its own cultural continuity and expansion. The church is an instrument of the *Kingdom of God*.

Moment Extras

Questions and Comments for Reflection

1. Explore Jesus' 80 synoptic references to the Kingdom of God in your favorite concordance. What insights can you glean from Scripture?
2. How clearly do your constituents and colleagues grasp the Kingdom of God?
3. What are some explanations for marginalized understanding of the Kingdom?
4. How would you illustrate the connection of missions to the Kingdom of God?
5. What actions steps can you take to help people grasp the power of Kingdom-theology?
6. If you were preaching on missions and the Kingdom of God, what would be a preferred text and exegetical outline?
7. Do Christians plant church in order to make disciples or are churches planted because disciples are being made already?
8. What is one thing you will do to be a faithful 'herald of the Kingdom?'

Links

[The Kingdom of God](#) by John Bright [book]

News From The Center

C4USM Connections

C4USM Connections is our new e-newsletter sent out periodically. It is designed to keep you informed about the training, research, and resources offered by the Center for U.S. Missions. [Click here to subscribe.](#)

Mission Moments is a monthly e-newsletter sent by the Center for U.S. Missions to bring information and encouragement to all who desire to share God's great love in Jesus Christ with others. Permission is given to copy this article for distribution within your congregation or organization. Please credit the author and the Center for U.S. Missions www.c4usm.org. For more information contact the Center at 949-854-8002 x1780; office@centerforusmissions.org