

## Sabbath School Lesson #11 – The Kingdom of God – 6-12 Jun 2015

**C**hrist said that those who enter the Kingdom of God “shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29). As Christians, we are now citizens of heaven. We are “not conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2). The world will never be converted by our conformity to its evil practices; to exert influence, we must live and speak and act as “sons and daughters” of God (2 Corinthians 6:18), as committed citizens of the kingdom of God.

Christ came to reveal to men the kingdom of God – to enunciate its principles, to manifest its spirit, to reveal its character. Of it He said: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). He says, “Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). And His apostles declared, “The kingdom of God is ... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). Those who through Christ “have access by one Spirit unto the Father ... are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:18-19).

Before being admitted into the kingdom of God, we “were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel” (Ephesians 2:12), and through Christ we were naturalised to become “fellow-citizens with the saints” (verse 19; Deuteronomy 33:2; Jude 14). In being admitted to the commonwealth of Israel, as fellow-citizens with the saints, we necessarily must have absolutely and forever renounced and abjured all allegiance and fidelity to the foreign sovereignty to which we were formerly subject, as every alien must do to become a citizen of another earthly government. Without this renunciation we would have a divided allegiance; but can there really be any such thing as a divided allegiance? And the true answer is, No; for it is written, “No man can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). It is certain that no former alien, now admitted in the kingdom of God, can carry with him any shadow of allegiance to anything of this world. It is written: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). Yes, we “must needs be subject” to earthly governments, “for conscience sake,” and “for this cause” also we must “pay tribute” (Romans 13:5-6), but as fellow-citizens with the saints in the kingdom of God, we meddle not in political affairs, but “Preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Adventist Christians are ministers of the gospel of the kingdom of God. As citizens of the heavenly kingdom, we have no business to meddle with the affairs of earthly governments. We must leave that business to those who acknowledge this earth to be their home. If earthly rulers think to regulate the affairs pertaining to the kingdom of God, they are guilty of gross presumption, to say the least. But if they may not of right presume to regulate the affairs of the kingdom of heaven, much less may the citizens of heaven interfere in political affairs of earthly kingdoms. As ministers of the gospel of the kingdom of God, we have but one commission, namely, “Preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2). In no other way in the world can men be made better. Adventist Christians who turn to politics are denying their calling.

Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). Every kingdom of men is of this world and of this world alone. Adventist Christians are not of this world, for Christ says to us, “I have chosen you out of the world” (John 15:19). Christ, our Master, did not meddle in the political affairs of the kingdoms of this world, even for the cause of the gospel. Satan offered Christ “all the kingdoms of the world;” why did He not take them and rule over them and convert them and thus save them? – He could not, because to take them would have been to recognise “the god of this world,” who had offered them (Luke 4:5-8). As “the end of all things is at hand” (1 Peter 4:7), the Lord would have His people bury political questions.

Adventist Christians, who cite Daniel and Joseph as statesmen in excuse for their politics, show great blindness. Daniel and Joseph’s conduct never conflicted with being heavenly citizens. They were captives and slaves. They were placed in high offices, not as citizens of the commonwealth of Babylon or Egypt, but as slaves. Their patriotism was not of Babylon or Egypt, but only of the Promised Land – for Daniel (Daniel 9) – Joseph (Gen. 50:24-25; Ex. 13:19; Jos. 24:32). Daniel served kings of his captivity as all captives from Jerusalem had to do (Jer. 29), so did Joseph, but not as citizens of Babylon or Egypt. Had Daniel and Joseph

been citizens of Babylon or Egypt, like Moses, they would not have volunteered to meddle into political affairs. Moses was a citizen of Egypt, of a royal family, heir to the throne, but Moses did not volunteer to meddle into political affairs of Egypt. Moses “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures of Egypt” (Heb. 11:26) and than any political position attached to Egyptian citizenship. This being what Moses, the great exemplar of that era, did, and Daniel and Joseph being of the same character, we know by it precisely what they would have done had they in their respective places been citizens instead of slaves. Daniel and Joseph, being only slaves of the kings where they were, like all God-fearing men, were respectful, obedient, and faithful to their “masters according to the flesh” (Eph. 6:5).

Christ hath left “us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). He who saith that “he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). Christ never, in any manner or to any degree, took any part in political matters or in State affairs. So faithfully did Christ hold to that principle that when a man asked Him, only “speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me,” He refused, with the words, “Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?” and then said to them all, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:13-15). Why did Christ persistently keep aloof from all political and State affairs? Was it because all things political and governmental were conducted with perfect propriety, that there was no place for anything better, no room for improvement such as even He might suggest? Not by any means. There was political corruption at that time.

Why did Jesus not call for civil reform? Why did He not reform the State to establish the kingdom of God? The people were ready to cooperate with Him in any such work of reform. Indeed, the people were so forward in the matter that they would have forced Him to be King, had He not withdrawn Himself from them (John 6:15). The answer to this is, because Christ came to “preach deliverance to the captives” (Luke 4:18) with a mission “to save the world” (John 12:47), which He could neither do by civil reforms nor through State politics.

“The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses – extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our Example kept aloof from earthly governments – not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually and must regenerate the heart” {DA 509.3}.

“Not by the decisions of courts, or councils, or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established; but by the implanting of Christ’s nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit. ‘As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God’ John 1:12, 13. Here is the only power that can work the uplifting of mankind. And the human agency for the accomplishment of this work is the teaching and practicing of the word of God” {DA 509.4}. Christ is our Example. The conduct of Christ is Christianity. Conformity to that Example in the conduct of the individual believer – this and this alone is Christianity in the world. The conduct of Christ, our Example, was totally separate from all political affairs of the State. Christianity, therefore, is the total separation of the believer in Christ from all political affairs of the State, total separation of religion and State in the individual believer.

Decidedly committed to gathering His followers into the kingdom of God, Jesus said to His disciples forever, “Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world” (John 15:19). And to His Father He said of His disciples forever, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16). Every Adventist Christian in this world, then, must be in the world as Christ was in the world. “As He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master” (Matthew 10:25). Jesus our Master was always, and in all things, and by fixed design, completely separated from all political affairs of the State. It is forever enough “that the disciple be as his Master” and “Preach the Word.” “In regard to the world, Christians will say, We will not dabble in politics. They will say, decidedly. We are pilgrims and strangers; our citizenship is above” (RH, 21 June 1898).