

V. The Counterattack of Kingdom —Through the Church of Jesus Christ

“But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full right of sons.” (Gal. 4:4,5)

The Beachhead

God in the New Testament time sent His own Son Jesus Christ to the world to redeem mankind, so that men may be saved by faith and return to the Kingdom of God.

But *“the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19)*. Jesus referred to Satan as *“Prince of the world” (John 14:30)*. Undeniably, ever since Adam and Eve succumbed to Satan’s temptation, the whole world became Satan’s captives and followed him. But thank God, through Jesus Christ, the Kingdom struck back into Satan’s domain. Bethlehem of Judea was the beachhead. The Holy Babe in the manger who made Satan tremble is the Supreme Commander of God’s army, the church. Satan was determined to destroy the Babe. He stirred up the heart of king Herod who sent soldiers and killed all the male infants under 2 years of age in and around Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16)!

But God had already sent Joseph, Mary and the Babe into Egypt, where they waited until Herod died, and then came back and settled down in Nazareth. *“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” (Luke 2:52)*

Matthew’s gospel reminds us of our Lord’s attention on the Kingdom. It seemed that His thought was centered on the gospel of the Kingdom and His thought focussed on the coming of the Kingdom:

“From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near.’” (Matt. 4:17)

“Jesus went throughout Galilee...teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom.” (Matt. 4:23)

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:3)

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your Kingdom come,” (Matt. 6:9,10)

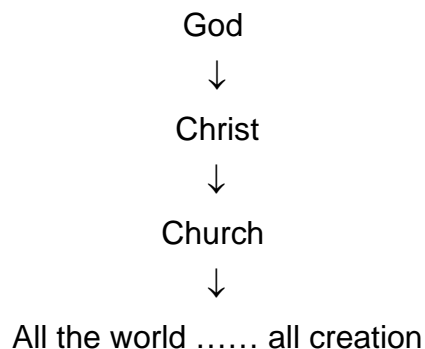
“These twelve (disciples) Jesus sent out with the following instructions. ... As you go, preach this message: the Kingdom of heaven is near.” (Matt. 10:5,7)

“I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 16:19)

“This gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matt. 24:14)

The Mission of the Church

God established the church through Christ, and sent the Spirit to work in the church in order to accomplish what was not accomplished through Israel. the Great Commission in the Old Testament: *“All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Gen. 12:3)* is echoed in the New Testament, *“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” (Mark 16:15)*



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Before the first coming of Christ, God’s plan of salvation revolved around the nation of Israel. After Christ’s resurrection, it shifted from Israel to the church. *“Therefore I tell you that the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.” (Matt. 21:43)* Thus the church is *“A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” (1 Pet. 2:9)* Here we see the fulfillment of Paul’s message that a branch of the good olive tree is broken off and some wild olive branches may be grafted in, *“...until the full number of the gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved.” (Rom.11:25,26)*

The early church, in a short span of 70 years, spread the gospel throughout Jerusalem, Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome and the entire Mediterranean region!

Beginning in the fourth century, Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire. During the next millennium the church enjoyed state support and outward growth, but lost its Biblical faith and true spirituality. It was not until the 15th and 16th centuries when God used John Wycliff, John Huss, Martin Luther, John Calvin and others to bring back the Biblical truth of Justification by Faith to the church, and thus initiated the Protestant Movement.

Global Missionary and Revival Movements

Two centuries later, God used the Pietists, the Brethrens, the Puritans, the Methodists and a host of His servants like Zinzendorf, Carey, Morrison, Livingston, Sundar Sighn, Taylor, Judson and others to spearhead the modern global missionary movement. Early missionaries carried God's messages to Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania!

At about the same time, the Spirit of God kindled spiritual awakenings in many parts of the world; true revivals broke out in scores of nations, such as the Great Awakening in America (1734-1744), Korean Revival (1903), Welsh Revival (1904), Manchurian Revival (1908), Hsinhwa Revival (1909), Shanghai Revival (1925), Shantung Revival (1931) etc. During these revivals, God greatly used His servants such as Wesley, Tennent, Edwards, Whitefield, Moody, Finney, Roberts, Goforth, John Sung, to purify and to invigorate churches in both the East and the West.

The Student Volunteer Movement in late 19th century again stirred up interest in worldwide missions. Then the two world wars paradoxically both hindered and strengthened the missions movement. While slowing down the mission sending efforts, they inadvertently opened the eyes of the liberals to see the reality of sin and the cruelty of man in the "real world", and the dire need of a Savior! These and other factors greatly contributed to the growth of evangelical faith in the 1950s.

Worldwide Evangelization Movements

After the middle of 20th century, a series of world evangelization congresses took place under the leadership of Billy Graham, Carl Henry and others: Berlin (1966), Lausanne (1974), Pattaya (1981) and Lausanne II (1989). These gatherings have given enormous impetus to churches throughout the world towards the fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission. They have also generated various national and regional evangelization movements, including the Chinese CCCOWE Movement in 1976.

By God's grace, the second Lausanne Congress in 1989 generated the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, which was greatly used by God in that decade. It motivated churches in over 100 countries of the world to fulfill Christ's Great Commission. The Movement conducted two global Consultations in Seoul, South Korea (1995) and South Africa (1997).

The Counterattack of the Kingdom

Today the gospel is being spread in the world at a speed and to an extent that are unprecedented. Knowledge and tools for global missions are also unprecedented. More importantly, God has raised up prayer movements in many parts of the world, and through these intercessions the burden and effort of world evangelization have gained tremendous momentum.

The Kingdom forces (the church) are fighting back! Throughout the past 2 millenniums, since the beachhead of Bethlehem, they have advanced to every corner of the earth, rescuing people from Satan's domain into Christ's Kingdom, as Paul said to the Corinthian church, *"They have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."* (II Corinthians 10:4-5)

The church is God's royal legion. It obeys God's command, fights for Him and accomplishes His mission!

To have an abundant and victorious life, Christians and church leaders must recognize:

1. Christians should love not only their own churches (local, visible), but also the church (the global church, the universal body of Christ). May God help us to

broaden our love and interest beyond the four walls of our own local church, and enable us to achieve true unity and cooperation in global missions.

2. The visible churches are only transitory in God's eternal plan, the goal is to usher in God's eternal Kingdom. We need to be more Kingdom-conscious and Kingdom-minded. The duty of the church is to manifest the invisible Kingdom of God through Christians' faithful lives and testimonies.
3. Jesus Christ is the head of the church which in form is His body. Since He is the triumphant Lord, we will follow Him in victory.

The Kingdom has returned indeed! Although the world is still under the power of Satan for the time being, God's Kingdom has returned and penetrated more and more into Satan's domain. Ever since Christ came to the world to accomplish God's salvation plan, people have been able to become citizens of the Kingdom, through salvation by faith in Christ to learn to be Christ-like and to bring others to Jesus. The Kingdom of God is already here, existing in the hearts of all believers. (Luke 17:21)

According to Patrick Johnstone, editor of *Operation World*, all of the 13,000 groups of unreached people in the world will be adopted in 21st century by God's churches, which will be responsible for evangelism and church planting among them.

By the estimate of Dr. Ralph Winter, founder and president of U.S Center for World Mission, if every Christian in the world today were to witness to seven non-believers, the Great Commission would be fulfilled!

In China, there were about 800,000 Christians in 1949 when the government changed hands. Half century later, the number has increased to between 80 and 100 millions — 100-fold growth! If this rate were to continue for another 50 years, China could become Asia's most evangelized nation and the strongest partner in global missions!

About 110 years ago, South Korea did not have a single Christian church. Today almost one third of the South Korean are Christians. Seven out of the 10 largest churches in the world are in that country. Currently, the South Korean churches have over 10,000 missionaries serving in over 100 countries!

In half a century after the colonial rule, African churches have grown 50%. Their missionary outreach has grown proportionally.

After 500 years of Spanish rule and influence, the people in Latin America were mostly Catholics. But since the turn of the 20th century we have seen an amazing increase of Protestants. In 1900, there were only 250,000 Protestants. But by 1990, the number had grown to 40,000,000 (a 120-fold of growth)! Brazil churches lead the third world churches in global missions. The number of Christians in Brazil exceeds the total number of Christians in the entire Western Europe!

Unreached Peoples, Unreached Lands

As Patrick Johnstone observed, during the past two centuries, the key areas of world churches and evangelism have been in the North Atlantic region (1700), Pacific region(1800), to Africa(1960), Latin America(1970), East Asia(1980), and Eastern Europe and West Asia(1990).

Thanks God, He used the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement in 1990s to remind the world of the missionary challenge of the 10/40 Window—the most unevangelized region of the world.

In addition, Dr. Luis Bush recently called to reach out to the Turkish Window, 35 to 45 degrees north of the equator, from Urumchi, China to Skopje, Macedonia, where the Muslims are opening up to the gospel of Jesus Christ in an unprecedented way!