

THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE | SESSION 4

THE LORD'S DAY, THE KINGDOM, ESCHATOLOGY, AND MISC. DOCTRINES

THE LORD'S DAY

- The BF&M assumed “the first day of the week is the Lord’s Day.”
 - Nothing in Scripture makes such a statement.
 - This would make worship services in Israel and throughout the Middle East difficult to align with the statement, since almost all middle-eastern worship services are conducted on Saturday (Sunday being a regular work day).
- The statement doesn’t require Sunday worship, but comes close.
 - The day is “Christian institution for regular observance.”
 - What if it is not regularly observed?
 - In the Middle East?
 - Are Saturday worship services outside of the BF&M?
- If it is “a Christian institution,” and it is “for regular observance,” does the BF&M promote tradition as a means of knowing the will of God?
 - Institutions are, “stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior.” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institution>).
 - That is, a “Christian institution” is a “Christian tradition.”
 - The BF&M is correct that Sunday as the Lord’s Day is “a Christian institution.”
 - As a tradition, is it appropriate to require that it “should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private”?
- The redeeming (although contradictory) comment on the Lord’s Day is that “Activities on the Lord’s Day should be commensurate with the Christian’s conscience....”
 - This is contradictory because of the previously definitive remarks of what “should” happen on this day.
 - It is redeeming because Paul teaches that one day is not of more value than another (Col. 2:16).

THE KINGDOM

- This statement is a train wreck!
- The Kingdom includes “His general sovereignty.” A serious statement that confuses sovereignty with the Kingdom (which is consistently presented as *not having arrived*) needs to go back to the drawing board.
- The Kingdom “also includes His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King.” If God’s Kingdom is “His general sovereignty” then “His particular kingship” is irrelevant.
 - Either He is King or He is not!
 - This kind of division of the indivisible results from a confused position on the Kingdom from the beginning.
- The statement proceeds to say that, “Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ.”
 - Note that “the realm of salvation” is entered into by “commitment,” not *by grace alone through faith alone*.
 - Note also that, since the Kingdom is “the realm of salvation,” we now have “general sovereignty,” and “particular kingship” and “salvation” as the Kingdom of God. It is no wonder that there is such *kingdom confusion* among evangelicals!
- Christians are supposed to “pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come.”
 - The labors are (I suppose) to expand God’s “general sovereignty” (which must be generally lacking) and His “particular kingship” by convincing more people to have a “childlike commitment to Jesus Christ.”

- Statements like this open the door to the Social Justice movement so troublesome in the church today.
- The most redeeming aspect of the statement is the recognition that, “The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.” The totality of the statement requires the futile work of Kingdom building and allows for (invites?) a post-millennial (“realized eschatology”) view.

LAST THINGS

- This is perhaps the greatest “non-position” position on a theological matter that has ever been penned by man. It is an almost *anything goes* statement.
- The statement says nothing of...
 - ...a rapture
 - ...a tribulation
 - ...a millennial reign
 - ...the fulfillment of promises to Israel
- The statement would have been more clear had it said, “Baptists have never been unified on eschatology, and we don’t want to start now. Therefore, we think things are going to happen in the future. They are mostly unimportant.”

EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

- Historically, evangelism and missions have been some of the strongest areas of ministry among Baptists.
- The “birth of love for others” is a result of the salvation experience. This statement makes humanitarianism (“love for others”) to be a matter of salvation, while it is actually a matter of human nature. This “birth of love” statement is only loosely related to the Evangelism and Missions category.
- The statement says that “Missionary effort... is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ.” The scriptures used in the footnote, however, display the inability to *rightly divide*, and an ineptness in the use of Scripture for developing a solidly Biblical missionary mandate.
 - Included passages with words of Jesus: Matthew 10:5-15 (especially 5-6), 16:19, 24:14
 - Included passages with words not from Jesus: Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:5-6
 - Not included: 2 Corinthians 5:19-20

EDUCATION

- Rather than, “Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence,” it would have been more accurate to say, “Christianity values enlightenment and intelligence.”
- The statement, “In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” is typical “Christ-centered” verbiage that needs revision. Perhaps, “The Bible is the source of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
- The position that, “The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge” is simply unfounded (if not arrogant). It assumes the Calvinist position of total depravity (even to the extent of intellect), and it precludes the unsaved from the full use of “human faculties.”
- The statement places education alongside “missions and general benevolence.” This emphasis on education is a long-standing (and commendable) Baptist position. The statement says that, “An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ’s people.” However, among Southern Baptists, grade-level education on a church or denomination is almost unheard of and largely looked down upon. The SBC is, generally, strongly in support of the public educational system. Only on the college level and beyond have Southern Baptists (and the majority of evangelicals) been serious about educational institutions.
- One wonders why, “there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility.” What proper balance is there between “freedom” and “responsibility”? Isn’t “academic responsibility” itself the pursuit of and dissemination of the truth? What kind of freedom would we want from this responsibility, and why?