

The Theocratic Kingdom | Introduction | By George N.H. Peters

Introduction

It is not an anomaly that some people, friends, family, and acquaintances turn away from anyone who questions the popular view. Peters writes, “Some men seem to be constitutionally constituted to be *heresy hunters*.”

Several years ago, when I first saw the light of right division, I shared my new finding with a long-time pastor friend. It was over dinner with our wives present. I didn’t bring it up initially until my pastor friend, who had recently retired from faithful service, shared some news with me; he and his wife had decided to move to Fresno and begin attending our church. He assured me that he would sit on the sidelines and support me. That certainly was good news to me since we were very good friends, as were our wives.

But a tempestuous conflict arose in my soul as he shared the news from across the table. I no longer held to some of the same doctrinal beliefs as he, and surely, the moment he stepped foot in my church, he would know it. Moving to Fresno meant selling his house, moving away from his grandchildren, and going through the stressful process of buying another home. I couldn’t let him blindly make all of those monumental decisions without telling him the truth that what he was anticipating in my church was not reality.

As we all beamed excitedly about working together again in some capacity, my smiles were feigned. I cleared my throat and said, “Let me tell you what’s been going on in my life...” I did what I no longer do today with those who are not *right dividers* (Today I go slower and try to persuade and reason); I opened the fire hose and told him everything. To put it in the vernacular, *I spilled my guts*.

Most of the conversation is a blur, but I know I said, “I get my doctrine for Christian living from Paul, not the teachings of Jesus.” I told him about moving from the ESV and NASB to the Authorized Version. I mentioned that I was questioning baptism. In my former church, where this man pastored, we engaged in *foot-washing* during

communion. I shared how that could not be for us since Jesus came *only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. On and on, I spewed, trying to remember everything I had been studying that was contrary to the standard evangelical message. Even though I was relatively new to *rightly dividing*, I wanted him to know the truth, at least as much as I understood at the time, before he packed his bags.

He didn't express it at the moment; everything from my mouth blew him out of the water. The next day I received a brief text that said, "*After much prayer, we have decided not to move.*" And that was that. I have hardly had any contact with him since.

Peters' introduction to *The Theocratic Kingdom* deals with this kind of response. He writes,

"Yet the simple fact is that if any one dares to arise and call into question the correctness of popular views and propose another, one too in strict accordance with the early teaching of the Church, his motives are assailed, his piety is doubted, his character is privately and publicly traduced, his learning and ability are lowered, his position is accorded a scornful and degrading pity, by persons who deem themselves set up for the defense of the truth." (Pg. 20).

There are undoubtedly many reading this who have also experienced this ostracizing firsthand. As the iconic line from the movie *A Few Good Men* goes, *people "Can't handle the truth!"* But Peters states this about truth,

"What God says is true, what man says may be true; and the truthfulness of the latter can be ascertained, its certainty demonstrated, by comparing it with that which God has declared. If the comparison is favorable, let us accept it; if unfavorable, then let us have the Christian manhood to reject it, no matter under whose name, patronage, or auspices it is given." (Pg. 23).

The apostle Paul encountered three kinds of people in Acts 17 when they heard him speak of *the resurrection of the dead*,

Yes, people hold their popular views near and dear, and generally, there are three kinds of response. The apostle Paul stood face-to-face with these kinds of people in Athens. Luke records, "Some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter... Howbeit, certain men clave to him and believed."

Peters concurs,

He describes the mockers:

“While the deepest thinkers freely admit that new and valuable contributions to theology are reasonably to be anticipated, that such are absolutely required at the present juncture, and that such can only be found in the rich resources of the Word, yet it is remarkable that a contribution thus given will, especially in the hands of those whose minds are controlled by human traditions and by an exalting of the Church authority above that of the Scriptures, be rejected and anathematized on the ground of its being in opposition to their preconceived and favorite form of doctrine.” (Pg. 23).

Then the curious:

“Others, through indifference or an indisposition to examination, will pass it by with, probably, a momentary interest.” (Pg. 23).

And finally, the believers:

“Others again, the few tried friends of intellectual and theological effort, will give it a fair, frank, and sincere reception and form a candid estimate of its value based exclusively upon its correspondence with the Holy Scriptures.” (Pg. 23).

The mocking, curiosity, and belief that Peters described were stirred up by his “*careful attention to the kingdom itself.*” It is that Kingdom that Peters calls “*The blessed hope*” throughout *The Theocratic Kingdom*.

He says of this hope,

Prophets, apostles, and Jesus himself, especially in his last testimony, continually point the eye of faith and the heart of hope to this kingdom as the bright light which can clearly illumine the past and present and even dispel the darkness of the future.” (Pg. 13).

And so in this introduction, Peters says he will strive to show *what the Covenants demand, and what relationship the second coming, kingdom, and*

glory of "The Christ" sustains to the same in order that perfected Redemption¹ may be realized" which he says, "This logically, introduces a large amount of converging testimony." (Pg 13).

The nature of the Kingdom is tossed around Christian circles as spiritual. It's a Kingdom within our hearts, many say, but then they turn and say *We are building the Kingdom*. The fact of the Kingdom being a real physical and future Kingdom, promised to the nation of Israel, hardly garners any traction within the Church.² Peters thinks that it will take real persecution in the Church for people to wake up to the truth of the Kingdom,

"It is only when the dreadful storm of persecution and death, alluded to in several propositions, shall, when excited and marshaled by the elements and forces not at work, burst with fearful violence upon the Church, and beat with pitiless vehemence upon the heads of true, unflinching believers in Christ, that this work will find a cordial response, and a hearty welcome in the breasts of the faithful."

He continues,

"When the dreams of fallible man, now so universally held as the prophetic announcements of God, are swept away by stern reality; when, instead of the fondly anticipated blessedness and glory to be brought about by existing agencies, the blood of man shall again stain and steep the soil of earth with its precious crimson, then will the doctrine of the Kingdom, as here taught, be regarded worthy of the highest consideration, and then will it also become a solace, hope, and joy under tribulation." (Pg 24).

Peters discusses the value of his use of *propositions* rather than chapters. In his view

¹He never completely states what he means by perfected Redemption, but, he talks of "*our hope of perfected Redemption, the expectation of the final restitution of all things*" (Obs. 3, pg. 159). And that "*perfected Redemption is realized only in the Kingdom*" (Obs. 5, pg. 153).

² And yet, Alva J. McClain states in his book, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, "Our Lord's inseparable and central relation to the Kingdom may serve to explain, at least in part, the compelling interest and fascination which the subject of the Kingdom of God has exercised upon the greatest minds in the Church...down to the massive treatise by George N.H. Peters." He admits, however, that "Literature on the subject would include writers of almost every conceivable theological viewpoint." Alva J. McClain. *The Greatness of the Kingdom*. BMH Books. Winona Lake, Indiana. 1959. Pg 5.

“The form of propositions adopted avoids repetition and ensures easy reference. It also gives distinctness to the numerous subjects so intimately connected with the kingdom, and it enabled the writer to abridge what otherwise would have required considerable enlargement (pg. 27).

And he gives a caution,

“The propositions, separately treated, are to be examined and criticized in the light which each one sustains in its connection to the whole. It is but a low polemical trick to detach one from the rest without indicating its relationship to others, and upon such a detachment frame a charge of error. It does not require much cunning or skill to wrest the words of any author from their connection, to misrepresent their meaning, and to hold them up to undeserved reproach.” (Pg. 27).

Some can't handle the truth and have no *sympathy* for a study of the Kingdom. They will stop at nothing to twist and misalign someone who is merely attempting to arrive at the Truth from God's word. This should not come as a surprise, and I am certain my pastor friend, at least in his heart and mind (since he is not a gossip and I would highly doubt he shared our conversation with anyone), will twist some of the truth I shared with him—without calling me and asking for discussion.

Quoting Zeisius^{3 4}, Peters ends his introduction:

“If the words of Christ, who was eternal Wisdom and Truth, were perverted, why should we wonder that His servants and children suffer from similar misrepresentations.” (Pg. 27)

³ One of the issues with Peters citations, as noted in the Preface, is that he typically only cited the last name. I could not find any info on Zeisius, however, Lange quotes him often. Is this Mattias Zeisius.

⁴ Quoted in Lange's Commentary on Matthew, Page 495. Lange, John Peter, and Philip Schaff. *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Matthew*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008. Print.