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## BY CONVICTING THE WORLD

What kind of kingdom is Christ's kingdom? How is it governed? Christ explains this in the text when he says: **“The Holy Spirit will convict the world.”**

The kingdom of Christ is not to be a government established and organized in a worldly way. It is not to be run by human wisdom, power, might, law and order. Rather, the kingdom of Christ is to be a government of the Holy Spirit. It is to be a spiritual kingdom, in which Christ rules invisibly. Christ is not to rule externally, by physical force, but internally, by the word that the Holy Spirit is to preach. By the preached word the Holy Spirit will work

in the heart of man.

“The Holy Spirit,” Christ says, “is to convict the world.” This does not mean that the Holy Spirit will conquer the world by armor and weapons and earthly power. Rather, the Holy Spirit will carry out an oral word or preaching office which is called God’s word, or the word

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of the Holy Spirit, sent by Christ. That is what is going to invade the world and attack it.

This is what it means to convict the entire world, not just a few people, not just one or two nations or countries. This is what it means to convict both Jews and Gentiles, scholars, wise men, and saints, who all excel in their respective kingdoms.

By the term ‘world’ Christ does not mean the masses or the rabble. Rather, he means the very essence of the world, that which is most praiseworthy, that which cannot be convicted of anything at all in external earthly kingdoms.

In particular, Christ is thinking of those who wanted to be holier than everyone else, namely, the Jews. They after all had been given the Law of Moses and were called ‘The people of God.’ Christ earlier had said that they hated him and his disciples without cause, just as was written in their law. In this way Christ gave his apostles power and might. Indeed, he gave them authority over all the world, which was to hear them and be subject to their preaching.

Christ strengthens and comforts the disciples. Because

they were simple common people, the preaching of the disciples would be despised by the world and would not have any prestige. In fact, wherever they would challenge the world with their convicting preaching, the disciples would be hated, suppressed, and suffer.

Nonetheless, their preaching would have power, strength, and force. Even though the world would thunder and rage against it with persecution, punishment, and killing—not only with all its own power and might, but also that of the entire kingdom of hell—the world would have to hear it and would not be able to overturn and resist it. “This is why,” Christ says, “you should not be terrified and saddened by the fact that I leave you bodily. For I wish to give you something in leaving which is far better than what you have had so far while you were with me.”

“I also wish to accomplish far greater and more glorious things than what could take place so far. The Holy Spirit will accomplish through you things which pertain to my kingdom far more glorious and powerful than you now imagine. He will do this so that you will not, as you do now, plan and scheme how to become rulers on earth and conquer great kingdoms” (which is all perishing stuff, about which God does not care, and where there has been always more fools than pious men).

“Rather, the Holy Spirit will place you in a government by which you will judge the consciences of all men. That which is greatest in the world—that is, all its wisdom and holiness—will be subject to you. You will judge, convict, and condemn it. Furthermore, no one shall, nor can, escape sin, death, and hell, or get to heaven, who does not hear

your word and desire to obey the same.”

“The Holy Spirit will also give you such comfort and courage that you will not be terrified as you now are. You also will not be deathly afraid of the world’s intimidation, anger, and rage against your preaching. Rather, you will confidently continue to convict, regardless of what both world and devil can do, and does do against it, with persecution, murder, and the power of all hell.”

This is the promise concerning the work that the Holy Spirit is to begin in the kingdom of Christ, which is the

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teaching office of the apostles.

This is to be carried out by convicting the world as it finds it, and that is, outside of Christ. It does not exclude anyone great or small, learned, wise or holy, rich or poor.

In short, this is what it means to draw the world’s wrath upon oneself and to pick a fight. This is why one must be struck in the mouth. For the world, which rules here on earth, neither wants, nor can put up with, someone who does not want the world to be right. This is why persecutions must begin because of this. This is why one party must yield to the other, the weaker one to the stronger one.

Since, however, the office of the apostles is to be nothing but a teaching office, it cannot be carried out with worldly might and force. This is why the world keeps hold of its external rule and power against the apostles.

At the same time, because it is the office and work of the Holy Spirit, the apostles’ office of convicting, which

confronts the world, is not to be hindered. It is to overcome and permeate everything, as Christ promised the apostles: "I will give you the mouth and wisdom which your opponents will not be able to resist."

To be sure, the Holy Spirit has also previously convicted the world of the same thing. Just as Christ rules at all times, and the same Christ is "yesterday, today, and forever," (Hebr. 13:8), the Holy Spirit has preached from the beginning of the world through the holy fathers Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist. Such convicting has been preserved by divine power.

Yet now it is to begin in earnest. Christ wishes to establish a public convicting that is to take place not only among the Jewish people but throughout the entire world until the Last Day.

This public convicting is to be much more powerful and penetrating so that hearts are struck and wounded. This is what was said in Acts 2:37 about the first sermon of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost. The apostle's sermon cut to their heart. That is how they were enlightened and converted from their blindness.

Yet, on the other hand, whenever people do not want to accept such convicting, it is to effect their condemnation. They are to take offense, stumble and fall into eternal damnation. In this way, this convicting is to be a power unto life and salvation for the believers, but for the others it is to be a preaching and power unto death, as St. Paul says in 2 Cor. 2:16.

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1. How is Christ's kingdom to be governed?
  2. Is the kingdom of Christ a physical or spiritual kingdom?
  3. What is the Holy Spirit going to use to break into the world and attack it?
  4. What does Christ mean by the term 'world'?
  5. Would the disciples have prestige in the world?
  6. Would the world be able to overturn and resist the preaching of the disciples?
  7. What were the disciples to judge?
  8. What would be the reaction of the world to the apostles?
  9. What type of office is that of the apostles?
  10. Did the Holy Spirit work before the time of the apostles?