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THE REVIEW

“The Most High Rules in the Kingdom of Men”

By Pastor Mark Strangman, Moderator IBFNA

“I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, ‘What doest thou?’” (Dan. 4:34-35).

Are you a list-maker? I recall a movie my family and I enjoyed together about a woman who made lists for everything. All over her house were lists posted of things she had to remember to do in order of priority. From shopping lists to “to-do” lists, she constantly reduced her entire life's purpose to several post-it notes. What kinds of lists do you have? You probably have a “to-do” priority list, and I am sure you must have a prayer list. You might even have a bucket list of things in the world you would like to do most or places you long to visit. Lists are a good way to help organize our busy lives.

The Bible contains several lists, which God has given to us to enable us to serve Him. The Great Shema, the foundational instruction for the nation of Israel, included a very important list from God: “Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut. 6:4-5).

You must love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and might. This exemplifies an individual's devotion to his heavenly Father. Deut. 11:13-29 describes the benefits of following this command for the Israelite. Reinforcing the timelessness of this command, Jesus repeated it in Mark 12:29-30: “And Jesus answered him, ‘The first of all the commandments is, ‘Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength’; this is the first commandment.’” He properly interprets Deuteronomy by adding our mind's devotion to that of our heart, soul, and strength. This is the foundational truth by which to live our lives for the Lord.

Another powerful list is found in Micah 6:8: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” The Lord is clarifying through Micah the true



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love we must have to the Lord. The context of this instruction emphasizes that our devotion to Him is not founded on our actions but on the condition of our heart. We could offer to the Lord thousands of rams, tens of thousands of rivers of oil, a perfect lamb, or even our firstborn for our sin (interestingly, this is what the Lord has done for us in the offering of His Son), but these things would fall far short of what the Lord requires of us. Again, this list is foundational truth for living and serving our great God.

The Lord has given us many more lists in His Holy Word. One could even make the argument that the entire book of Ephesians is a complete list by which we can stand against any evil foe and prosper for the Lord. But the list on which I would like to focus is found in 1 Pet. 2:17: "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

In this context, Peter instructs us how to live for the Lord in a secular, heathen society. All of Scripture underscores that God's people are never going to fit in with this sinful world. No matter how hard we fight for what is right, the world will continue to spiral downward until the time when Jesus returns and sets up His millennial kingdom. It was like that for the Old Testament Jewish believers, and it is like that for the church today.

God has provided us with the instruction of His Word so that we can live successfully for the Lord in an evil world. Look at how Peter highlights this truth in the preceding verses: we must desire the Word of God as a baby desires milk (v. 2); we are living stones built into a spiritual house (v. 5); we are founded on Christ as the cornerstone, which was rejected (vv. 6-9); we are holy, royal priests who are chosen (vv. 5, 9); we are a holy and peculiar people who are to live in this society submissively under the authority of men, but ultimately for the Lord's sake (v. 9). These are necessities for serving the Lord (v. 16).

The list at the end of the passage is a fourfold template by which we can accomplish all these necessities. Each of the four commands is in the present tense, except for the first which is in the aorist. "Honor all men" is a general exhortation, but Peter emphasizes loving our brothers and sisters in

Christ. "Honor our leaders" is a command under the stronger command to reverentially "fear the Lord." We must place ourselves under the care of the Lord while accomplishing the three lesser commands. We are to submit to every ordinance of men for the Lord's sake, because we reverentially serve Him above all. Accordingly, Peter and the other apostles respond to the religious leaders, who commanded them not to preach, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

How can we, while serving the Lord, submit ourselves to evil men who rule over us? The answer is given throughout Scripture, especially in the book of Daniel. Having been cast into an impossibly evil society, the faithfulness of Daniel and his companions to their Lord was challenged over and over. As they purposed in their heart in chapter one (following the Great Shema of Deuteronomy 6), their devotion to the Lord was tested by harsh situations: interpreting the king's impossible dream; entering the fiery furnace; and facing the den of lions. These men repeatedly proved their devotion to the Lord.

The harshness they experienced reinforced the king's mockery of God's vision. He built a version of the statue God had shown him, while making it all about himself in his escalating pride, and he commanded all to bow down or face the furnace. Azariah, Mishael, and Hananiah respond, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Their courage was founded on their faith in scriptural truth, and they acted on their humble love for the Lord with all their heart, soul, and strength. They understood that this king could do nothing to them unless the Lord allowed it.

Daniel explained to the king the sovereignty of Almighty God in Dan. 2:21: "He changeth the times and the seasons. He removeth kings, and setteth up kings. He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." Facing the fiery furnace, the Hebrew brothers

trusted their God without regard for what the world and its king might do to them. They understood that the Lord will do as He wills, both with them and with kings: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. As the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1).

But Nebuchadnezzar still had much to learn. In the aftermath of God's miraculous deliverance of His servants, the king was caught up still in his own pride. Only after God completely humbles him with a base existence, living as a wild animal without human understanding, does Nebuchadnezzar come to understand his place in God's universe. God revealed that this would happen to him in order to make him know that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:32). The king concludes that "the Most High does according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. And none can stay his hand, or say unto him, 'What doest thou?'" (Dan. 4:35).

It is the same for the people of God today. We see evil rule the world, and we are tempted to wonder if God is still in control. We see wickedness praised and truth defamed. But just as in the days of Daniel, our God reigns. Just as Jesus told Pilate that he has no authority over Him except what His Father allowed and appointed, so the leaders of our day are serving the greater purpose of God. We must "if it be possible, as much as lieth in [us], live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). In order to do this, we must love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We must do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. We must then honor all men, love the brethren, fear God, and honor the king. We can place all our trust in the Most High, who rules over all the kingdoms of men and especially over our hearts.

Looking forward to seeing you all in June in beautiful upstate New York at our Annual Conference. May God richly bless the IBFNA.

Robert T. Ketcham

Pastor Dan Greenfield

**Editor's Note: Dan Greenfield is the founding pastor of Orwell Bible Church (OH) and serves the Lord as the Executive Secretary of the American Council of Christian Churches, the post once held by our brother and IBFNA leader, Ralph Colas.*

The IBFNA is a constituent member of the ACCC. For more information about the Council, visit their website at www.accc4truth.org. Brother Greenfield will focus on the life of Robert Ketcham as the keynote speaker for our Annual Family Conference, June 20-22, at the Bible Baptist Church in New Hartford, NY.

Robert Thomas Ketcham (1889-1978) was a Baptist fundamentalist characterized by tender pastoral care, burning love for Christ, and aggressive denunciation of and separation from apostasy. He pastored churches in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Iowa, and served as the President of the American Council of Christian Churches.

Ketcham's greatest influence was with the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC), a fellowship of churches which separated in 1932 from the liberal Northern Baptist Convention (NBC; now the American Baptist Convention).

The only published biography of Ketcham, *Portrait of Obedience* by J. Murray Murdoch, relates how R. L. Matthews asked Ketcham what advice he would give to pastors. Ketcham's response was, "(1) Preach Christ. (2) Give the whole counsel of God. (3) Expose error—neoevangelicalism especially. (4) Obey God. (5) Be available to your people."¹ Ketcham's inclusion of exposing error as essential to pastoral ministry arose from his conviction that every "faithful pastor must warn their sheep of dangers in the feeding grounds."² Note that there is only one piece of advice Ketcham elaborated on; of all that Christ's church must be

warned, new evangelicalism deserved pastors' special attention when exposing error.

Ketcham's listing this as a "must" points to something wrong and dangerous about new evangelicalism. As Murdoch's biography sought to paint a portrait of obedience, we would expect to have read about Ketcham's exposing new evangelicalism in Murdoch's biography, but the author did not write about that. In fact, the only place where new evangelicalism is mentioned in the biography is Ketcham's advice to pastors.

New evangelicalism as a formal movement began in the 1940s, seeking a course between fundamentalism and liberalism/modernism. You must understand that this movement did not come out of thin air; it has a prehistory. New evangelicalism arose from existing attitudes and practices in the 1920s and 1930s that rejected fundamentalist militancy (contending for the faith against apostates, Jude 3) and ecclesiastical separation (having no ministry collaboration with apostates, 2 Cor 6:14-17).

Liberalism/modernism denied that the Bible was the sole and final authority for faith and practice, viewing Scripture as just a collection of man's thoughts about religion and life. They said the Bible had mistakes and needed "modernizing" for contemporary use (thus the term *modernism*). Consequently, man is the standard of truth, deciding what in Scripture is true or false.

They believed in evolution, not immediate supernatural creation. Mankind became inherently good, not sinful. Jesus was not virgin born, did not die vicariously for sinners, nor did He miraculously rise from the dead in their view. They believed that such were early Christians' thoughts and stories, by which they dressed kernel truths in the clothes of their time. Modernism sought to, as it were, "update the wardrobe" for contemporary relevance. When it came to ministry, they believed that Christians should work together with other sects and religions for the good of mankind. This was "gospel" work on a "social" level, thus the "social gospel."

These ideas spread through churches, educational institutions, and mission boards. Many Bible

-believing Christians were greatly alarmed and so aggressively taught and defended orthodox Christian doctrine, exposing modernistic content and teachers. Such Christians became known as fundamentalists and their practice of aggressive exposure is called militancy. When fundamentalists were unable to win the battle against modernism, they obeyed Scripture by separating from it and forming their own denominations, associations, and fellowships (2 Cor 6:14-17; 2 John 7-11).

Robert Ketcham was a fundamentalist and fought modernism in his denomination, the NBC. Early on he exposed it with specific, penetrating, and public denouncement. Only three years into his ministry, Ketcham spoke before the Pennsylvania State Convention on "Satan's Counterfeits," pointing out the kind of men Convention seminaries produced. He called them "ministers of Satan":

These are the kind of men some of our seminaries are turning out to us, asking us to ordain, and then when [they get] too old to preach the doctrine of the Devil, ask the saints of the Most High to support them. What is the end of such? Are they to be cared for? See Gal 1:8-9. No - accursed. By what right do we take one [into] the bosom of the church for support when the curse of God abideth on him? Let us walk carefully in the light of 2 John 7 to 11. If the N.B.C. will make standing for the whole counsel of God the prerequisite for support, I'm with them. If not, count me out.³

The New World Movement was launched in 1919 to Christianize the world. Ketcham's church in Butler, PA was assessed \$17,000 to support the movement. In response, Ketcham published a pamphlet, "A Statement of the First Baptist Church Butler, Pa. with reference to The New World Movement and the \$100,000,000 Drive." Ketcham was committed to exposing error falsely presenting itself as Christian, which thus smeared Christ's name, corrupted the Christian faith, gutted the gospel, damned men's souls, and poisoned the church.

It would be nice to think that every pastor felt and acted as Ketcham did against apostasy, but sadly that was not the case. Fundamentalists tried

to remove modernists, but such attempts failed because too many of them were unwilling to finish the fight. Reminiscing over a list of 156 Baptist leaders who signed a statement on April 21, 1920 warning of modernism, Ketcham could count only six which ultimately separated from the apostate denomination. Ketcham recalled:

When the fires of conflict got hot, man after man on this list was found either completely over in the enemy's camp or at least shamefully silent. Our honest conviction is that most of them thought that modernism would recede and behave itself if we gave it a slight "slap on the wrist," and they were, therefore, willing to join in such a procedure. But once it was discovered that modernism had no intention of surrendering its foothold in the Convention and that they were prepared to fight to the last ditch and that such a fight would involve many of these signers in their pastoral, professional, and official positions, as well as life-long friendships, they like the majority of Gideon's army, retired to their tents in peace. They were perfectly willing to carry a fly swatter, but they would not wield the sword.⁴

Ketcham described committee members responsible for rooting out modernists:

The "hunters" on this Committee were afraid of mortally wounding the game. We have always felt that this Committee was far too generous with the schools in view of the mountain of evidence that was stacked up before it, and *one cannot be true to Jesus Christ in the fullest sense and be very tender with his enemies*. It was just such *compromising* and "*fiddling around*" on the part of the "Convention Fundamentalists" that led many of us to give up in despair that any solid victory could ever be won within the Convention.⁵

One such reticent fundamentalist was J. C. Masee. Ketcham told how, during the 1920 convention, fundamentalists "had victory right in our hands and J. C. Masee took it out." Ketcham said Masee thus "proved to be a pussyfooter."⁶ Masee

again failed to carry through in 1931, again earning Ketcham's censure: "Another instance and illustration of the kind of 'wrist slapping' leadership provided by Convention Fundamentalists. Might as well try to 'limit' the Devil! Don't 'limit him.' Brethren, eliminate him!"⁷

Ketcham thus repudiated men who were "middle-of-the roaders" who were "fundamental in their own theology" but were "at the same time silent about, or sympathetic with, the modernistic leaders and their policies."⁸ They were responsible for the fundamentalists' defeats, and Ketcham exposed them for their disobedience. This was the soil from which new evangelicalism sprouted in the 1940s, seeking a course between fundamentalism and modernism. Ketcham saw the disobedience and danger of non-militant non-separatism and exposed it for its true character, because he sought to obey God no matter what.

Endnotes

1 (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1979), p. 252.

2 Robert T. Ketcham, "The Oxford Group Movement." Sermon #365 in the Ketcham Papers archives at Cornerstone University.

3 Ketcham, "Satan's Counterfeits," sermon #401, Ketcham Papers. Ketcham remarks at the end of these notes, "Preached before State convention of PA while I was pastor at Brookville. They asked me to preach on and present the ministry and missionaries benefit fund. *I did*. These are my notes for that occasion in 1916" (emphasis original).

4 Ketcham's editorial remarks in G. H. Moulds, "The Conflict Between the Modernists and the Fundamentalists in the Northern Baptist Convention Since 1920," *Baptist Bulletin* (February, 1941), p. 3.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 4 (emphasis added).

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

8 R. T. Ketcham, *Charges and Proofs of Doctrinal and Ecclesiastical Deflections from the Baptist Faith on the Part of our Denominational Leaders and Programs* (printed for R. T. Ketcham, n. d.), p. 14, quoted in Murdoch, *Portrait*, p. 120.

Appraising Gifts of Christ

Pastor Kevin Hobi

In 2014 an elderly Red Sox fan, named Gail, appeared on the Antiques Road Show with a baseball card collection. The collection had been passed down to her from her great-grandfather, whose mother ran a boarding house in Boston.

That boarding house was home to the 1871 Boston Red Stockings, the first baseball team to be paid professionally. The Red Stockings had given the young boy of the house a free pass to their game, where he purchased the cards of the whole team, including the famous Wright brothers and one of Al Spaulding, the first to field with a leather glove, and the eventual founder of the sports equipment empire that bears his name today.

Appraised at \$1 million, the collection ranks today as ninth in the top ten most valuable items ever appraised at the Show. The appraiser, Leila Dunbar, started to cry as she estimated the collection's worth. What the baseball world gave away in 1871 for nothing is very valuable from our perspective today.

Ephesians 4 speaks of some gifts that amount to very little in the world's eyes, but which are very valuable from God's eternal perspective (v. 11). These gifts are apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. I think we are correct to learn from Eph. 2:20 that the apostles and prophets were foundational gifts, who then gave us our New Testaments, and that the evangelists and pastor-teachers are gifts our churches still receive today to preach and teach our completed Bible.

Is God's perspective our perspective when it comes to these gifts, or has our understanding come under the influence of the world? Our passage gives us three reasons to greatly value the gifts of verse 11.

The Giver Has Been Very Generous (vv. 7-10)

One of the things that made the collection of 1871 baseball cards so valuable is that it included a letter of appreciation, which the Boston Red

Stockings wrote to Gail's great-great-grandmother. The team was visiting an opponent in Washington D.C. for a series, but they were rained out, so they all wrote a line of appreciation to their boarder back home in Boston and signed their name.

Those signatures validate the collection and enhance its value. The boarder probably received many such letters from others, but this letter is part of a valuable collection because of who they were that authored it.

Our text tells us that we are reading here about gifts of Christ (v. 7). Christ is the Giver. This alone gives the gifts great value. As the Giver He is the fulfillment of a prophecy found in Psalm 68:18, which says that the Lord God of that Psalm would ascend on high and give gifts to men.

Paul explains how we know the Psalm spoke of Christ in His resurrection and ascension. For the Lord to ascend, He would first have to descend to the place lower than "on high," namely the earth. This descending was the humiliation of the eternal Son of God in the incarnation of Jesus.

While on earth Jesus Christ was born of a virgin and lived a sinless life with the purpose of seeking and saving those who are lost. He died on the cross for the sin of sinners like you and me. He was buried, and He arose again victorious over sin and death. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He reigns now as the one who fills all things (v. 10). Whatever in our universe exists without Him is void, meaningless, and empty.

This is the Giver who gives us the servants of the Lord, evangelists and pastor-teachers. He had to die and rise to do so. He had to ascend to the Father to do so. He had to first become the filling of all things to do so. The gifts of verse 11 were not easily given by the Giver. For this reason, we must greatly value them as He does. Greatly value these gifts because the Giver has been extremely generous.

The Recipients are Needy (vv. 12-16)

Evidently, Gail has no need for \$1 million, because she is determined to keep the collection rather than sell it. Her memorabilia are valuable, but not because they are necessary.

The opposite is true for the gifts of our passage. They are valuable because they are essential. Jesus gives our churches these gifts because we have a great need for them: the perfecting of the saints for their work of ministry; the edifying of the body of Christ; the unity of the faith; the knowledge of the Son of God; growth into Christlikeness as His body; protection from winds of false doctrine and the influence of lies; our ability to love one another. Jesus has given us evangelists and pastor-teachers because we are a desperately needy people and because we live among people with needs.

He told us to pray for gifts like these: "When [Jesus] saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest'" (Matt. 9:36-38). If we have failed to pray earnestly for these laborers, perhaps it is because we have not been moved with compassion about shepherdless sheep the way our Savior was moved.

The servant of the Lord is His answer to the prayer of a church moved with compassion for

needy sinners everywhere. Greatly value these gifts as an answer to prayer, recognizing our churches' great need for them.

They are Gifts of Grace (v. 7)

In actuality, that \$1 million set of baseball cards is little more than a dozen or so old pieces of paper. What makes them valuable is not what those pieces of paper are in themselves, but rather the imprimatur of the baseball players they bear.

Every true evangelist and pastor-teacher would confess readily that in our flesh dwells no good thing, nothing of great value. What makes us valuable ultimately is the imprimatur of God's grace in our lives. God has saved a sinner, sanctified a sinner, equipped a sinner, and called a sinner, and He has done it all by His grace. He has done it to the praise of the glory of His grace (Eph. 1:6).

Sometimes it is easier for us to see the glory of baseball cards than it is to see the glory of the grace of God at work in the life of the Lord's servant. Many who would pay \$1 million for that card collection would never lift a finger to advance the ministry of an evangelist or pastor-teacher.

Let these gifts be what move you to tears; let this be what your home treasures; let this be what you desire to pass down to your children; let this be what you would not take \$1 million for. Evangelists and pastors are gifts given by a generous Giver, given to us who are desperately need them, and given to the glory of God's grace.

2023 Family Conference



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