

## Spiritual Authority by Watchmen Nee

### **Chapter 6: How God Establishes His Kingdom**

Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation. (Heb. 5.8-9) And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him. (Acts 5.32) But they have not all obeyed the glad tidings. For Esaias says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" (Rom. 10.16 Darby) Rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thess. 1.8) Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently. (1 Peter 1.22)

The Lord Learned Obedience through Suffering As God secured the principle of obedience through the life of our Lord, so God also established His authority through the Lord. Now let us see how God today establishes His kingdom on the basis of that authority. The Lord came to this world empty handed; He did not bring obedience with Him. He learned obedience through what He suffered and thus became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. By going through suffering after suffering He learned to be obedient unto death, even death on a cross. When the Lord came forth from the Godhead to become man, He truly became a man—weak and acquainted with suffering. Every suffering He bore ripened into a fruit of obedience. No suffering of any kind was able to stir Him to murmuring or fretfulness. How different from this are the many Christians who fail to learn obedience even after many years. Although their suffering increases, their obedience does not. When suffering comes they often murmur 52

Spiritual Authority with anguish, indicating again that they have not yet learned obedience. But as our Lord passed through all kinds of sufferings He continually exhibited the spirit of obedience; and so He has become the source of our eternal salvation. By the obedience of one man many have received grace. Our Lord's obedience is for the sake of God's kingdom. The aim of redemption is to further the

kingdom of God. God Will Establish His Kingdom Have you noticed how greatly the fall of the angels and of man has affected the universe, what a great problem it has created for God? It was God's intention that the beings He created should accept His authority, yet both kinds of created beings rejected it. God could not establish His authority in the created beings; even so, He would not withdraw it. He might withdraw His presence, but He will never give up the authority He has initiated. Where His authority is, there is His rightful place. Hence God on the one hand will affirm His authority and on the other hand will establish His kingdom. Though Satan continually violates God's authority and men daily rebel against Him, God will not permit such rebellion to continue forever; He will set up His kingdom. Why does the Bible call God's kingdom the kingdom of the heavens? Because the rebellion has not been restricted simply to this earth, but has in addition reached to the heavens where the angels rebelled. How, then, does the Lord establish God's kingdom? He establishes it through His obedience. Never once was He disobedient to God; never once did He resist God's authority while He was on earth. By obeying perfectly and by permitting God's authority to rule absolutely, He established God's kingdom within the realm of His own obedience. Now just as our Lord has done, so must the church today obey in order that the authority of God may prosper and the kingdom of God be manifested.

### How God Establishes His Kingdom

53 God Ordains the Church to Be the Vanguard of His Kingdom After the fall of Adam God chose Noah and his family. However, they too fell—after the flood. So God called out Abraham to be the father of a multitude of nations, His intention being to set up His kingdom through Abraham. Abraham was succeeded by the election of Isaac and then later of Jacob. The descendants of Jacob multiplied greatly under the Egyptian oppression, and therefore God sent Moses to deliver them out of Egypt that they might establish a new nation. But because there were disobedient ones among them, God led the Israelites through the wilderness in order to teach them obedience. Nevertheless, they persisted in their rebellion against God, with the result that the whole generation fell dead on the way. Even though the second generation succeeded in entering Canaan, they still did not hearken to God's word with a perfect

heart; hence they could not drive the Canaanites completely out of the land. Saul became the first king, but due to his rebellion the kingdom could not be established. It was not until David was chosen that God found in him the king who was after His own heart, for David fully obeyed the authority of God. Even so, traces of rebellion still remained within the nation. God had appointed Jerusalem to be the place where His name would be set, but the people continued to sacrifice at the great high place in Gibeon. They were weak in obedience. They had a king yet they lacked the spiritual substance of a kingdom. Before the time of David there was a kingdom without a proper king. At David's time, both the king and the kingdom were present, but the spiritual substance of the latter was still missing. God's kingdom had yet to be truly established. The Lord came to this world to set up God's kingdom. His gospel is twofold in nature: the personal and the corporate. As to the personal, the gospel calls men to receive eternal life through faith; as to the corporate, it bids men to enter God's kingdom through repentance. 54 Spiritual Authority God's eyes are on the kingdom: the so-called Lord's prayer, for example, begins and concludes with the kingdom. It starts with "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." God's kingdom is that realm within which the will of God is carried out without any interference. The prayer ends with "thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (Matt. 6.13 margin). The kingdom and the power and the glory are interrelated. "Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ," proclaims Revelation 12.10. This is because the kingdom is the scope of authority. "For lo, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you," says the Lord (Luke 17.21 margin). "In the midst of you", not "within you." The Lord Himself is actually the kingdom of God. When the Lord Jesus is among you the kingdom of God is in your midst. This is because God's authority is completely carried out in His life. Now just as the kingdom of God is in the Lord, so is it to be found in the church—because the Lord's life is released to the church and so God's kingdom extends also to the church. Beginning with Noah God managed to get a kingdom, but it was earthy and not God's kingdom. God's kingdom actually begins with the Lord Jesus. How small

was its scope at the outset. Today, though, this grain of wheat has borne much fruit. Its scope embraces not only the Lord but many saints as well. God purposes that we be His kingdom and His church, since the church is ordained to be the sphere wherein God's authority is exercised. He wishes to have His rightful place in more than just a few individuals; He desires the whole church to give Him absolute preeminence in order that His authority may prevail and there be no rebellion. Thus will God set up His authority in the midst of His created beings. He wants us to be obedient not only to the direct authority which He Himself exercises but also to the delegated authorities whom He sets up. What He expects is full obedience, not a partial one. How God Establishes His Kingdom 55 Gospel Calls People Not Only to Believe but Also to Obey The Bible mentions obedience as well as faith, for we are not only sinners but additionally sons of disobedience. What Romans 10.16 means by "believed our report" in Isaiah 53.1 is "obeyed the glad tidings" (Darby). The nature of believing the gospel is obeying it. "Rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1.8). Those who do not obey are the rebellious: "Unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth . . . shall be wrath and indignation" (Rom. 2.8). The disobedient are the rebellious ones. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth" (1 Peter 1.22). This clearly indicates that purification is by obedience to the truth. Faith is obedience. Believers would best be called "obeyers," for they are to be subject to the authority of the Lord as well as to believe in Him. After Paul had been enlightened he asked: "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22.10) He not only believed, he in addition submitted to the Lord. His repentance was caused both by understanding grace and by obedience to authority. When he was moved by the Holy Spirit to see the authority of the gospel, he addressed Jesus as Lord. God calls us not only to receive His life through faith but also to maintain His authority through obedience. He counsels us who are in the church to obey the authorities He has established—in home, school, society, and church—as well as to obey His direct authority. It is not necessary to point out specifically which person you should obey. It simply means that whenever you encounter God's

authority, directly or indirectly, you should learn obedience. Many are able to hearken to and obey only a certain person. This shows that they have not seen authority. It is vain to obey man; it is authority that we must obey. To those who know authority, even a slight disobedience will make them feel that they have been 56 Spiritual Authority rebellious. But those who have not seen authority have no idea how rebellious they are. Before being enlightened, Paul kicked against the goads without realizing what he was doing. After enlightenment, however, the first thing which happens is that the eyes of Paul are opened to see authority, and this seeing continues to increase thereafter. Though Paul met only a little brother by the name of Ananias, he never questioned what kind of man Ananias was— whether learned or illiterate—because he was not looking at man. Paul recognized that Ananias was sent by God and he accordingly subjected himself to that delegated authority. How easy it is to obey after one has learned authority. Through the Church the Nations to Become God's Kingdom If the church refuses to accept God's authority God has no way to establish His kingdom. God's way of obtaining His kingdom is first in the Lord Jesus, then in the church, and lastly in the whole world. One day a proclamation will go out, announcing that "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11.15). The church occupies the place between the kingdom found in the person of the Lord Jesus and the further extension of that kingdom to be found when the world becomes the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ. The kingdom must be found in the Lord Jesus before it can be established in the church; it needs to be implanted in the church before it can be secured among the nations. There can be no church without the Lord Jesus, and there can be no further extension of God's kingdom without the church. While on earth the Lord obeyed in even very minor matters. For example, He paid the temple tax. Having no money, He obtained the shekel from the mouth of a fish. Again, when asked on another occasion about paying civil taxes, He affirmed: "Render . . . to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22.21). Although Caesar was a rebellious person, he How God Establishes His Kingdom 57 was nonetheless set up by God; consequently, he must be obeyed. After we

have fully obeyed, our Lord will then rise up and deal with those who disobey. Through our obedience the kingdom shall be extended to the whole earth. Today, though, many are sensitive to sin yet not to rebellion. Men ought to have a sense for authority as well as a sense of sin. To be deficient in sensing sin deprives one from living as a Christian; to lack in sensing authority disqualifies him as an obeyer. The Church Must Obey God's Authority We must know how to obey in the church. There is no authority within the church which does not require obedience. God intends to have His authority fully manifested in the church and to have His kingdom extended through the church. After the church has fully obeyed, the entire earth shall be brought under the authority of God. Should the church fail to let God's authority prevail within it, God's kingdom will be thwarted from covering the whole earth. The church is therefore the way to the kingdom; but it can equally be the frustration to the kingdom. How can God's kingdom be manifested if we are not able to be subject to a little hardship in the church? How can God's kingdom prevail if we always reason and argue among ourselves? We have greatly delayed God's time. All rebellion must be eradicated so that God's way may not be blocked. Once the church has truly obeyed, all nations will follow suit. The responsibility on the church is immense. When the will and command of God find free passage in the church, His kingdom shall surely come.