

The Contrast of Kingdoms: **Credentials of Man vs. Credentials of God**

In the Scriptures there are many warnings about men commending themselves: Prov. 27:2 'Let another man's lips praise you...'; Rom. 1:21-25 ('professing themselves to be wise, they became fools'); 1 Cor. 3:1 ('Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?')

We are also directed to avoid the traditions of men when pursuing the work of The Kingdom: Col. 2:8 ('according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ'); Mark 7:7-9 ('You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition')

We must not be found protecting our reputation in order to avoid the reproach of Christ: John 12:42-44 ('for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God'); Prov. 29:23-26 (The fear of man brings a snare...)

When organizations of men qualify themselves they often use vestments or robes (such as schools, attorneys, doctors, the Catholic Church, even Pastors) to establish a false hierarchy among brothers (i.e. creating Pharisees). Luke 20:46 (Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes...)

The world has determined the titles of qualification that make you significant (Masters Degree, PhD, etc.). God never created these. He created only titles of responsibility for giftings (i.e. pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc. - Eph. 4:11)

Even the word 'counselor' is now used to establish separation between members of the Body (as opposed to the words 'disciple' or 'minister' - which are inclusive of all believers). It is the Lord's Life in someone that qualifies them, not how old they are or the degrees or credentials they hold. 1 Tim 4:12 (Let no one look down on your youthfulness...)

In the Kingdom of Heaven, God calls and qualifies a man (i.e. Moses, or Paul) not other men bestowing credentials: Luke 16:15 ('that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God') 1 Tim 4:14 (bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery); 2 Tim 1:6 (which is in you through the laying on of my hands) The disciples laid hands upon, prayed for, and commissioned believers before they were sent out to serve (the training organization or the individual believers don't endorse themselves).

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We are to be doing things for God's glory, not man's recognition: Matthew 23:5 (But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.)

Jesus taught perpetually about the 'kingdom of Heaven' vs. the kingdom of men. As to appearance: Jesus was not anything to look at (nor king David vs. Saul); Isa. 53:2 (He has no stately form or majesty)

In the Kingdom, God calls and qualifies His ministers. In the world, organizations (and people) qualify themselves.

An objective group of men should endorse or commend us; not our own organization. Someone else should decide my qualifications - not I. Even the world uses 3rd party validation of a person's qualification. As an example, a medical student (with school graduation certificates) isn't qualified to practice medicine until examined and certified by a non-school, objective 'board' of experienced practitioners.

Jesus didn't come to be served, but to serve. Better to serve in obscurity before God than with notoriety before men. Luke 14:7 (He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor...)

Are we to be like God the Father? Gen. 3:22 'Behold, the man has become like Us...' (see 'Real Life Challenge' diagram in the front of the VCL Conference Manual), or are we to be conformed to the image of His Son? Romans 8:29 states that we are to be conformed to the image of God's Son – not the image of God the Father. For example, Philippians 2:7 says that He, 'made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men'. Isa 53:2-3 (For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him).

So, are you operating upon the principles of the Kingdom of the World or the Kingdom of Heaven?