

CHAPTER 09 SUMMARY: “SOJOURNERS & EXILES”

Seek First: How the Kingdom of God Changes Everything, by Jeremy Treat

DISCERNING OUR CULTURAL MOMENT

1. The Unprecedented Global Growth of the Kingdom of God

- “An estimated eighty-thousand people become Christians everyday throughout the world” (p. 157).
- “The name of Jesus is being praised in 4,765 languages throughout the world” (p. 157).

2. The Decline of Cultural Christianity in the West

- “I am not convinced that Christianity is in decline in the West. *Cultural* Christianity is in decline in the West. And that’s a good thing. Cultural Christianity is when people identify as Christians by name (nominally) yet faith in Christ has no real effect in their lives” (p. 157).
- “So what are we to make of polls showing that Christianity has declined 7% in America? People who are Christians in name only (but no in any meaningful sense) are now shedding the title because it no longer helps them” (p. 158).

3. The End of “Christian America”

- “...in general American Christianity has confused the kingdom of God with the American Dream, exchanged biblical doctrine with pop psychology, and replaced devotion to Jesus with vague morality.... ‘Christian America’ was often a form of Christianity that ultimately existed to support me in my pursuit of individual happiness” (p. 158).
- “The end of ‘Christian America’ is not an obstacle for the church; it is an opportunity to rediscover the true nature of the church as a witness to God’s kingdom. We are exiles in a foreign land, and we’ve become far too comfortable in Western culture. America is not the promised land.... As citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we should long for the city of God as we live in the city of man” (p. 159).
- “We are exiles, and we face a moment in history when it is vital for God’s people to understand their context and their role within it. The goal of the church is not to make a Christian nation but to make disciples of all nations” (p. 159).

WE ARE NOT HOME YET

- “Echoes of exile have reverberated throughout every generation of God’s people. This is why in the New Testament the apostle Peter addressed his fellow Christians as exiles scattered throughout the land (1 Peter 1:1). As citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we remain sojourners and exiles on earth. We are not home, yet” (p. 161).

DUAL CITIZENS

- “We have dual citizenship: heaven and earth.... How do we live as dual citizens? First, we have to acknowledge that we face two ever-present temptations, each flowing from a lack of embracing the tension in our dual citizenship” (p. 161).

1. Tempted to Separate

- “As citizens of heaven, Christians have always been tempted to separate from the world. This temptation arises from a good biblical impulse: ‘Come out from them and be separate’ (2 Cor. 6:17). Furthermore, the idea of separation is implicit in the call for God’s people to be ‘holy,’ a word that means to be ‘set apart’” (pp. 161-162).
- “Although separating from the culture may originate in a biblical impulse to be set apart for God, it confuses God’s call to the church. We are not called to separate ourselves physically but to be set apart in our character in the way we live our lives” (p. 162).

2. Tempted to Assimilate

- “As citizens of the world, living in different nations and communities, there will always be a temptation to assimilate. This also originates from a good biblical impulse, a desire to love others and become ‘all things to all people, that by all means I might save some’ (2 Cor. 9:22). This impulse can also be taken to an extreme, resulting in a tendency to blend in and lose any distinctiveness as believers” (p. 163).
- “When the church gives into the temptation to assimilate, we sacrifice our holiness and lose our distinct identity. This happens when the church confuses the need for contextualization for with adaptation. Adaptation is changing the message to tell people what they want to hear. Contextualization is telling people what they need to hear and doing so in a way they can understand and apply to life” (p. 163).

A DISTINCT PRESENCE

- “God calls us to be a *distinct presence*. If we’re not distinct, then we would have nothing unique to offer the world. If we’re not present, then will have no impact. To truly be a people of distinct presence, we have to follow Jesus without separating or assimilating” (p. 166).
- “Faithfulness in exile means to be set apart from the city while being present within the city” (p. 166).

1. Putting Down Roots

- “Wherever you are, be present, let your light shine, and seek the peace of the city that God has called you to in this season of your life” (p. 167).

2. Strange to the World

- “The cultural shift that is taking place in America is an opportunity for the church to remember that we have a unique way of living, an uncommon set of beliefs, and a distinct approach to community—all shaped by our devotion to Jesus. What Christians believe is not normal, nor should we expect it to be. The gospel is a counterintuitive message and will sound strange to the world” (p. 167).

COMING HOME

- “Jesus went into exile to bring us home to God. In doing so, Jesus wasn’t only saving us from our sins but was bring the kingdom of God. The flaming sword of Eden symbolizes the separation of exile, the wooden cross of Golgotha represents the reconciliation of the kingdom of God. Until Christ returns, bringing heaven and earth together in the New Jerusalem, we will remain so sojourners and exiles on a journey to the greater city” (p. 170).