

The Kingdom

There are many terms by which the church is called. The word itself means "the called out" and such is appropriate for it is a body of people who has been called by God, called through the gospel, called from darkness to light (1 Peter 2:9; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:14). Consider several different terms which describes the church.

One of the first terms used by Jesus to describe his church is "Kingdom." When Jesus promised to "build" his church, he told Peter "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 16:19). Men can offer little dispute to the fact that Jesus had reference to the church when he spoke of the kingdom. He, and earlier John, had begun his preaching with the message "Repent ye for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mt. 3:1f; Mark 1:14f). Did he, or did he not, have allusion to his church when he spoke these words?

The church and the kingdom are identified as identical in many passages. Paul preached the kingdom at Ephesus and the church resulted (Acts 20:28). This principle is true: "we reap what we sow" (Gal. 6:7). Since Paul preached the kingdom at Ephesus and the church resulted, the church must be the kingdom. Other passages emphasize this same truth. Paul wrote the churches at Colossae and Thessalonica, but they were called the kingdom (Col. 1:2; 18; 13; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:12). The Hebrews came to the church but they received the kingdom (Heb. 12:22, 28). John wrote the seven churches of Asia but he was their brother in tribulation and the kingdom (Rev. 1:4; 9). More could be added, but these are sufficient.

God, through Daniel, promised that he would set up his kingdom in the last days (Dan. 2:44f). Such promise created expectation on the part of Jews everywhere to look for the kingdom. Nearly all Jews were looking for a kingdom in Jesus' day, although not all of them had clear perceptions about it. Expectation of a Messiah was synonymous with expectation of the kingdom.

Some disagree with these conclusions. Premillennialists view the church as an alternate plan to the kingdom; affirming that the kingdom of Daniel 2:44-45 is yet in the future. Space will not permit a full exposition of their error (and it is error) but certain observations must be made. Christ promised that there were some who heard him who would not die until they had seen the kingdom come with power (Mk. 9:1). Either they did

live to see that kingdom and that kingdom is the church or they didn't and Jesus lied about it. Another dilemma of the Premillennialist is Calvary. According to them, Jesus did not set up his kingdom because his nation rejected him. The assumption must be that had they accepted him, he would have set up his kingdom in which event, he would not have been crucified. Was the crucifixion of Jesus no part of God's plans for his Son? What answer will premillennialists give? To the person who desires justification from his sins, he is conscious of the fact that the death of Christ was mandatory for his forgiveness for while "all things are cleansed by blood, and without the shedding of blood, there is no remission", on the other hand "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats can take away sins" (Heb. 9:22; 10:4).

On the other hand there are those who regard God's kingdom as larger than the church, which subject will be considered, but that must wait for another day.

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