

The Kingdom Of God

There are a lot of terms used in the New Testament to describe the Lord's church, and one very common example is the term "kingdom." Although the term "kingdom" is used a few different ways in the New Testament, its primary use is to designate God's church as the kingdom. A failure to recognize that the church and the kingdom are the same has given rise to many false doctrines. The greatest of these is the 1,000-year reign theory which is so popular today. These errorists think that Christ tried to establish the kingdom, but was stopped by the obstinate Jews, and so as a compromise He established the church to serve the people until the kingdom comes.

What evidence exists to show the connection between the church and kingdom? The kingdom was preached as being "*at hand*" (Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:14-15). The parables of Jesus set forth the church as the kingdom (Matthew 13:24, 44, 45, 47). The apostles were given authority in the kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19; 18:18; 19:28). The people alive in the time of Christ were to witness the coming of the kingdom (Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27; 12:31-32). After the day of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the kingdom was spoken of as in existence (Acts 8:12; 20:25; 28:23, 31; Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:12). When we come into the church through the call of the gospel, we receive the kingdom (Hebrews 12:22-28). When we partake of the Lord's supper, we do it in the kingdom (Luke 22:16-18, 29-30). The Bible is clear in stating that the church and the kingdom are the same!

Furthermore, Christ is king of the kingdom. He was king by His own teaching and acknowledgement (John 18:37). Luke 23:1-3 says, "*And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.*" He conquered the realm of Satan and spiritual darkness in becoming king (Matthew 12:24-29; Luke 10:17-19; 11:17-22; Hebrews 2:9, 14-15; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 1:18). He also had a territory that was wrested from Satan (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 4:5-8; Revelation 1:5-9). He had authority and a throne (Luke 1:32-33; Ephesians 1:18-23; 1 Timothy 6:15; 1 Peter 3:22). He had a law (John 1:17; 17:8; 1 Corinthians 9:21; 1 John 4:6). This law will be the basis of our judgment at the last day (John 12:48).

The essentials of citizenship in God's kingdom is that one must first enter by the new birth (John 3:5; Acts 2:36-41). The new birth culminates in baptism, which produces the forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16). Submitting to the will of God means humbly receiving like a child. Jesus said, *"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein"* (Mark 10:15). While baptism is essential to salvation, it is only the beginning. Someone who wants to go to heaven must do God's will. Matthew 7:21 says, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."* God demands faithfulness (Matthew 25:34-36; 2 Timothy 4:7; Revelation 2:10). One must center their affections on heavenly realities (Philippians 3:12-15; Colossians 3:1-4). One must be united with the saints, for a house divided against itself cannot stand (Luke 11:17). In the end, greatness in the kingdom of Christ means sacrifice and service (Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:23-31).

The final picture of the kingdom of God is revealed in the parable of the tares (Matthew 13:36-43). The fate of those in the kingdom is also revealed by the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46). It is the same fate as those who do not obey the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, 10). At the end of time Paul said that kingdom will be delivered up to God: *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power"* (1 Corinthians 15:22-24).

The kingdom is a rich concept in scripture. While not developed in this article, the kingdom in Old Testament prophecy helps us to see its importance (Isaiah 2:2-4; Daniel 2:44-45; 7:13-14; Micah 4:1-8). The kingdom or church is truly a magnificent institution, worthy of our obedience and devotion.

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