

INTRODUCTION

1. The N.T. furnishes a great number of words and phrases which refer to the church. All of these signify and express different meanings, yet, all refer to the same institution. At present we are studying some of these terms.

One of the more frequent terms we come across is the word "kingdom." Sometimes it is called the "kingdom of heaven," "the kingdom of God," "kingdom of the Lord," "kingdom of the Son of His love."

It is well that we keep in mind that the church and kingdom are one and the same. Some have contended that they are two separate institutions.

A reading of **Matthew 16:18, 19** will show they are the same. "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

The words "church" and "kingdom" are used interchangeably in this passage.

A kingdom must have four essential elements: a king, subjects, laws and a territory. Remove or destroy any of these elements and the nature of the institution itself is changed. We shall now examine these four parts.

1. THE KING

A Anytime you have one person ruling a nation you have a monarchy. This is the type of government we have in the church. We might call it a theocracy.

When taking a course in Social Science it was always pointed the most ideal form of government would be to have benevolent despot.

In history very few kings have been good kings who ruled for the good of their people.

B Christ is our king. In Him we have the perfect king and one that we can all gladly submit to. Note the following Scriptures.

Revelation 17:14: "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." Because He is who He is, we faithfully follow him. We have no reservations about submitting to his authority.

Acts 2:36: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, who you have crucified, both Lord and Christ." In Ephesians 1:22 Paul tells us "And he has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church."

1 Peter 3:22: "Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him."

C If Christ is now serving as king obviously his kingdom is now in existence. Again the church and kingdom and one and the same.

2. LAWS

A A kingdom must have laws for without law there would be anarchy. Jesus pointed out that "a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand."

B Some of these laws were stated before the kingdom came into existence and some were made known shortly after its establishment. Our Constitution was written before we became an established country.

So it was that Christ announced his kingdom and some of its laws before it was established.

Perhaps we can understand better the statement of the Hebrews writer when he said, "For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives."

C After His death and ascension Jesus delegated authority to His apostles to set in force law that would govern his kingdom. However, their knowledge of these laws came from the Holy Spirit who inspired them so that they would make no mistakes.

Jesus promised the disciples "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."

Paul declares: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

D These laws were written down as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit so that we now have them in permanent form.

E These laws however are not burdensome or grievous. John says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).

3. SUBJECTS

A We become subjects of the king by a specific process. At first we are aliens. Paul reminded the Ephesians, "That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

B Being aliens we must first seek the kingdom. Jesus said, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45, 46).

C Citizens should be willing to obey the laws of the kingdom and submit ourselves to them in every way. Jesus said, "Now everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Even in a secular kingdom Paul is very plain that Christians should obey the laws of the land even if they did not like those laws. (See Romans 13:1-2).

D Finally we must be translated into this kingdom. Colossians 1:13; "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."

This translation is accomplished in baptism. Paul writes in Galatians 3:27; "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

4. TERRITORY

A Jesus once said, "My kingdom is not of this world." This indicates its spiritual nature which was greatly misunderstood. Even his disciples did not understand until after Pentecost.

The Kingdom

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B It is not mapped out area or territory. Being spiritual in nature it transcends the boundaries of nations on earth. Jesus said, "Nor will they say, 'See here!' or, 'See there!' For, indeed the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

C The kingdom exists then wherever the subjects exist. This can be in an assembled capacity or in a scattered sense. We never go out of the realm of the kingdom.

D The extent of the territory is dependent then upon us. Its borders extend as far as we extend into the world. Jesus commanded "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

Hence from the very beginning it has been God's intention for the kingdom be throughout all the world.

CONCLUSION

It is indeed a great honor to be a citizen in the kingdom of the Lord. Jesus once said, "For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:28).

Would you not like to be in this the greatest kingdom?