



"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." Matthew 28:20

Church of Christ • 13800 S. 4080 Road • P.O. Box 527 • Oologah, Oklahoma 74053

## The Kingdom of God

Chuck Northrop

One of the glorious names or designations God gave to the church is *the kingdom of God*. As with any name God gives, this designation reveals characteristics about the church. A kingdom is the dominion over which a king rules. Thus, the kingdom of God is the dominion over which God rules. For a kingdom to exist, there are certain criteria which must be met. First, there must be a king, and in the kingdom of Christ and of God, Jesus Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Acts 17:7; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 1:5; 17:14). Second, there must be territory, and within the kingdom of God, the spiritual territory is in the hearts of men (Luke 17:20, 21; John 18:36). Third, there must be laws to rule over the kingdom which in the kingdom of God's dear Son is the New Testament (Romans 8:2; Galatians 6:2; James 1:25). Fourth, there must be subjects or citizens within the kingdom, and in God's kingdom in the New Testament age, Christians are the subjects (Ephesians 2:19; Colossians 1:13). Finally, there must be privileges afforded to the citizens of the kingdom, and so citizens of Christ's kingdom "receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luke 18:30).

Within the New Testament, the term kingdom is used in a variety of ways. It is used of the "kingdoms of the world" (Matthew 4:8; Luke 4:5) which are the various political systems of men. It is used of Satan's kingdom. Jesus, when He was accused of casting out devils by Beelzebub said, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?" Finally, the majority of the times when the word kingdom is used, it is with reference to the kingdom of God. Interestingly, the term *kingdom of God* is also used in a variety of ways.

First, the term *the kingdom of God* is used of Israel. In Matthew 21:33-40, Jesus presented the parable of the vineyard in which He likened God to a householder who leased his land to husbandmen and sent servants to receive the fruit of his land. However, when his servants came, husbandmen beat one, killed another, and stoned another. So, he sent other servants, and they did

the same. Finally, the householder sent his son and they slew him. Obviously, the servants of the parable represented the prophets of old, the son represented the Son of God, and the husbandmen Israel who had rejected the prophets and God's only Begotten Son. Therefore, Jesus said, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43). When Moses gathered the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, he said, "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). In the New Testament age, Israel no longer has the privileged blessing of being God's kingdom, but the kingdom is given to those who bring the fruits of trusting obedience to Christ.

Second, the term *the kingdom of God* is used of the church. While in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus said, "That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build **my church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of **the kingdom of heaven**: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." In this passage, Jesus used the terms *my church* and *the kingdom of heaven* interchangeably. He promised to build His church while giving Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven (i.e. the terms of admission).

In the gospel accounts, the kingdom was yet in the future. John the baptizer, Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy preached "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Luke 10:9). Jesus taught the disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). When instituting the Lord's supper, Jesus said, "I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God . . . I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come" (Luke 22:16, 18). Further, Joseph of Arimathea "waited for the kingdom of God" (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50-51). And finally, Jesus taught there would be some who heard Him preach and teach who would "not taste of death, til they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1; Matthew 16:28; Luke 9:27).

Beginning in the book of Acts, the kingdom or church was a reality. Philip, the evangelist, preached "the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ" to the Samaritans, and "they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). Paul writing to the church in Colossae said Christ had "delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). Please notice the tense of the verbs in this passage. They were (*past tense*) delivered and translated. Paul also noted the Christians in Thessalonica were "called" (*past tense*) unto or into "his kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). Hebrews 12:28 says, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Again, notice the tense. This is present active. Even in the midst of the various trials, as the gospel was proclaimed, they were being added to the church. Thus, they were "receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved." Finally, John, the apostle of love, was "in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9).

In the New Testament age, the church and the kingdom of God are one and the same. This equivalence of terms is further seen in a brief comparison:

- Both have the same terms of entrance — baptism (John 3:3-5; Acts 2:47; Titus 3:5).
- Both have the same head — Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:15).
- Both have the same laws — "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25).
- Both have the same subjects — Christians (Ephesians 2:19; Acts 11:26).
- Both have the same seed — the word of God (Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:22-25).

Furthermore, the church came with power as Jesus prophesied concerning the kingdom (Acts 2:2-4; Mark 9:1). As Daniel prophesied concerning the kingdom, the church was established in the days of the Roman Empire (Acts 2:5; Daniel 2:44). Too, the church came in the lifetime of those to whom Jesus taught as Jesus promised concerning the kingdom (Acts 2:14; Mark 9:1). To the honest and sincere student of the Bible, there could be no doubt the church and the kingdom are one and the same.

## Observations and Concerns

January 17, 2024

Third, the term *kingdom of God* is used of the heavenly kingdom. When Jesus entered into Capernaum, a centurion asked the Lord to heal his servant who was sick at home with the palsy. After the centurion's display of faith, Jesus commended him on his great faith and rebuked the lame faith of Israel saying, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:10-12; see also Luke 13:28-29). Here, the "kingdom of heaven" has clear reference to the heavenly state of the kingdom for it is contrasted to the "outer darkness" of hell. Also notice the use of "children of the kingdom" which, again, refers to Israel. Later in describing the last day, Jesus made clear mention of the heavenly kingdom when Matthew recorded, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). A final passage to illustrate this use is when Paul said, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (2 Timothy 4:18).

In these later two uses of the term *kingdom of God*, the term has both an earthly and an heavenly application. Interestingly, sometimes in scripture, both uses are found together. For example, in the parable of the leaven (Matthew 13:33-43), Jesus said the good seed are the children of the kingdom which is an obvious earthly application (verse 38). Later in the explanation of the parable, He said, "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (verse 43) which is a clear reference to the heavenly kingdom. Paul does the same in the great resurrection chapter (1 Corinthians 15). In verse 24, he wrote, "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." Since the kingdom would be delivered up, it had to exist before the end of time. This kingdom is the church in its earthly state. Later in the chapter, Paul wrote, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Since "flesh and blood" has part in the kingdom here on earth, then this must refer to the heavenly kingdom which fits the context well.

A special note of consideration ought to be made concerning the phrase *the kingdom of heaven* as used in the gospel accounts. This phrase is uniquely used by Matthew thirty-three times. *The kingdom of heaven* refers to the place of God rather than God Himself. In the same way, we often refer to Washington D.C. as representative of the United States. Washington D.C. is the capitol — the place of political authority. Similarly, heaven is the place of religious authority (Matthew 21:23-27). It is the realm from which Christ exercises His authority as King over His kingdom. A close examination of the gospel accounts reveals the terms *the kingdom of heaven* and *the kingdom of God* are used in the same way; sometimes of the kingdom in its earthly abode and sometimes in its heavenly estate. In Mark 1:14-15 Mark recorded, Jesus came "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Matthew's account says, "Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Other parallel passages establish the same. (A couple of other examples are: Matthew 5:3 paralleled with Luke 6:20 and Matthew 19:14 paralleled with Mark 10:14 and Luke 18:16.)

The heavenly kingdom consists of both Israel and the church. It is composed of the redeemed of all ages. Only those who are faithful unto God in whatever covenant they may live will have part of this marvelous heavenly kingdom. Jesus said, "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" (Matthew 7:21). In these last times, only those who are obedient to the gospel of Christ, whom God has added to the church, and who are citizens of the kingdom will have entrance into the heavenly kingdom (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

**Welcome Visitors!** Thank you for coming our way!

**Praise in Psalm:** "*It is a good thing* to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: <sup>2</sup>To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night" (Psalm 92:1-2).

**Declaration of Appreciation:** Let us remember to offer up unto God thanksgiving for those who took the time and taught us the gospel.

The Wednesday evening adult Bible class will be watching the second video on **Personal Evangelism** by Rob Whitacre. The title of this lesson is *Let's Stay with the Message*.

There is a sign-up sheet in the foyer for our in-house lectureship. This year's lectureship is scheduled for March 22-24, and the theme is **Conversions in Acts**.

**Remember in Prayer:**

- ▶ We are thankful to God that the results of **Sammy Gray's** biopsy revealed he does not have cancer. He is scheduled to meet with his doctor regarding other health issues soon.
- ▶ **Andy and Nelda Hudson** are suffering with health issues, but we are grateful they were able to be with us this past Lord's Day.
- ▶ **Spencer Mashburn** had her tonsils and adenoids removed. She is recovering at home.
- ▶ **Caroline Swearingen** is scheduled to have her tonsils and adenoids removed on Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup>.
- ▶ **Betty Jackson**, daughter-in-law of Walter and sister-in-law of Doyle and Dicie, fell and injured her face and neck. She is currently in a wheelchair due to her neck injury.
- ▶ **Mary Kay Hope**, an acquaintance of the Swearingens, was injured in a car accident and is in a lot of pain.
- ▶ **Bill Roach**, an elder at the Owasso congregation, had surgery to remove cancer.

| Schedule of Services        | Assignments             |                    |                    |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                             | Wednesday, Jan. 17      | Sunday, Jan. 21 AM | Sunday, Jan. 21 PM |
| Sundays                     |                         |                    |                    |
| Bible Classes . . . 9:30 AM | Announcements           | Chuck Northrop     | Chris Nelson       |
| Worship . . . . . 10:30 AM  | Prayer                  | Chuck Northrop     | Chris Nelson       |
| Worship . . . . . 5:00 PM   | Song Leader             | Bill Dilks         | Doyle Jackson      |
| Wednesdays                  | Lord's Supper (speaker) |                    | Ross Swearingen    |
| Bible Classes . . 7:00 PM   | Lord's Supper           |                    | Chris Nelson       |
| Website: oologahcofc.org    | Lesson                  | Doyle Jackson      | Bill Dilks         |
|                             | Prayer                  | Chris Nelson       | Chuck Northrop     |
|                             | Door Attendant          | Ross Swearingen    | Chuck Northrop     |
|                             |                         |                    | Doyle Jackson      |