

HOME BIBLE STUDY



In lesson 5 we examined what God is pleased with in worship (John 4:24). God has also spoken about His kingdom. So, let us look again to the book of God.

THE KINGDOM IN PROPHECY

In the time of Daniel, God had used Babylon to destroy Jerusalem and the temple because of Judah's persistence in sin. While the Jews had been carried away from their land, God promised that there would be a time when He would set up a kingdom "which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44).

God sent a dream to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. Then the king posed a great challenge to all his magicians: They must tell him the interpretation AND THE DREAM! Of course the magicians were upset, for they could not do what the king asked (Daniel 1 - 2)!

Yet, Daniel knew the power of God. Therefore, he prayed and asked God to reveal to him the dream and its interpretation. When God revealed both unto him, Daniel went to the king. He described the great image the king had seen, which **represented four great world kingdoms** (Dan. 2:31-35). He explained that Babylon was the first kingdom which was shown as the head of gold (2:36). After Babylon would come "another kingdom" which relates to the breast and arms of silver (2:32, 39). This was the Medo-Persian Empire (cp. Dan. 8:20). Then would come "another third kingdom" which the belly and thighs of brass represented (2:39). This was the Greek

empire (cp. Dan. 8:20). After these, a "fourth kingdom as strong as iron" would come; yet its feet and toes would be a mixture of iron and clay. This indicated that the fourth kingdom would be both strong and weak (2:41-43). Later, we read that this fourth kingdom would "wear out the saints of the Most High" (7:23, 25). The next worldwide empire that came after Greece was Rome. Also, as God foretold, Rome persecuted God's people. It was in the days of that fourth kingdom that God would set up His unshakable kingdom (2:44).

Other prophecies tell us that: The ruler of this unshakeable kingdom would be BOTH king & priest (Psalm 110:1-4); the new law would start from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3); and this kingdom would be a spiritual one, not using physical weapons to build or defend it (Isaiah 2:4). So, did God's word fail?

THE KINGDOM AT HAND

John and Jesus came saying, "The kingdom of God is at hand" (Mt. 3:1-3; 4:17). That meant it was soon to come. Jesus even promised His disciples that some were alive then who would see the kingdom of God come "with power" (Mark 9:1). He told the apostles that they would be given the "keys of the kingdom" (Matt. 16:19). In other words, they would be the very ones to open the doors and allow people to enter this spiritual kingdom. Did Jesus lie?

THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

After Jesus died and was raised from the dead, the apostles proclaimed Jesus to be king at the right hand of God (Acts 2:30-36). And we read that Jesus is also High Priest (Heb. 5:5-10). Thus, Jesus fulfills Psalm 110:1-4 by being BOTH king and priest at the same time.

Of course, what is a king without a kingdom? Jesus said, "I will build **my church**" upon the firm foundation of Jesus being "the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:18). Jesus then said that He would give the keys of "**the kingdom**" to His apostles (16:19). Thus, in discussing the church, He calls it the kingdom. The church IS the kingdom. Consider also that Acts 20:28 says **the church** was bought with the **blood** of Christ. Then, Rev. 5:9-10 says that those He purchased with His **blood** are made a **kingdom**. This shows that the "church" and "kingdom" are different ways of describing **the same spiritual institution**.

Note also that this kingdom was established in the time of the Romans (Luke 2:1; 23:1-2), just as Daniel had said (Dan. 2:44). It also began in Jerusalem as Isaiah predicted (Isaiah 2:2-4; Acts 2:5). It is also a spiritual kingdom, not promoted or defended by physical weapons (Isaiah 2:2-4; John 18:36; 2 Cor. 10:3-6). In addition, Acts 2 fulfilled the prophecy Jesus made about the kingdom coming "with power" in that generation (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:6-8).

The church is the kingdom "which will never be destroyed" (Dan. 2:44). As Jesus said, "I will build my church **and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it**" (Matt. 16:18). "Hades" refers to the realm of the dead.

While many today deny that the church is the kingdom of prophecy, we see several important connections. It was founded at the right time, in the right place, has the right leader and is of a spiritual nature. No other church or kingdom has all these qualities.

Even so, some still say that because Jesus was rejected, "He was unable to establish the kingdom of prophecy, thus He established the church until the time when He will return to set up His physical kingdom." But please notice what this would mean: (1) The Old Testament prophecies would then be false, (2) Jesus'

promises would have failed, (3) and the apostles would be false teachers for saying the kingdom existed in the first century (Col. 1:13; Rev. 5:8-9). Furthermore, this theory of "pre-millennialism" (as it is called) focuses on a physical, earthly kingdom; rather than a spiritual one. Finally, it relegates the church to being an after thought. Yet the scriptures say that the church is "**according to the eternal purpose** of God which He purposed in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:10-11). Does that sound like the church is an after thought? No. The church IS the spiritual kingdom of prophecy.

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

One point we have not examined sufficiently is the statement Jesus made about "keys" (Matt. 16:19). Jesus basically told the apostles that they would be the ones to open the door to the kingdom. So, how does one actually enter? Jesus said, "Except one be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5). We must be born again. This new birth involves water and affects our spirit.

Peter used the "keys" by preaching the first public sermon after Christ's resurrection in Acts 2. He told the people to "repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). Peter used the "keys" of revealed knowledge and instructed sinners on how to enter the saved relationship with the Lord. When people followed Peter's inspired directions, the Bible says that the Lord Himself added them to the number of those who were being saved, which is the church (Acts 2:41, 47).

Paul explains further what is involved in the book of Ephesians. They were saved "by grace through faith", for no one has earned or deserves salvation

(Eph. 2:8). Yet, Paul indicates that there are still conditions that God has placed before us in order to receive His grace. He states in Ephesians 5:25-28: "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify it, **having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word**, that He might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Grace is seen in Jesus giving Himself, faith is seen in the word. Also, this reference to the spiritual birth is seen in the "washing in water", which is baptism (immersion) in water. Here is the full picture: God's **grace** provides cleansing through the **word** which tells us what to **do** (be baptized into Christ).

Many other Bible verses echo the exact same point that when we are "obedient from the heart to that form of teaching" we will be "made free from sin" (Rom. 6:17-18). Baptism is "into Christ" and "into His death" (where His blood was poured out) (Rom. 6:3-4). That is why Peter commanded it in the name of Christ in Acts 2:38 and in Acts 10:48.

Sadly, many today reject the word of God on this subject. Often this is because they have been indoctrinated and prejudiced against "doing something" in connection with salvation. They think that all "doing" is an attempt to earn salvation. Yet, every free gift has some conditions of acceptance. Even a free gift must be accepted!

There are some that say, "You believe in water salvation, but we believe in Christ as our Savior." Peter answers this in 1 Peter 3:21. In the context of discussing Noah's salvation "through water", Peter says, "Which also after a true likeness **does now save you**, even **baptism**, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the asking of a good conscience towards God, **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**." Peter, the

apostle, says that there is no power in the water itself that can cleans the soul from sin. **Amen**. So what is baptism for? **Peter says it is how we ask God for a clean conscience** and that its power is in **the resurrected Savior, Jesus Christ**. Baptism may be a physical act, but it is a spiritual plea to God. That is why those of the world do not understand water baptism. That is why many speak against it as "water salvation". We know what many say about it; but, dear reader, what does the Bible say about it? Will you listen to men or to God?

Also, many reject the idea that any particular church is better than another. Yet Jesus loved and died for His church, no one else's (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28). If it is important enough for Jesus to love and die for, then can we say it doesn't matter which church you belong to? Can we rightly say one church is as good as another? No.

CONCLUSION

There are many churches today; only one is founded and presently headed by **the right leader, Jesus Christ**. Some churches began in European countries or in the United States; only one **began in Jerusalem**. Many are ruled and regulated by man-made doctrines; only one is truly **ruled and regulated by the word of Jesus Christ**. Several have used or still use physical force and political power to establish and maintain themselves; only one is truly a **spiritual kingdom**. Many have their own version of the "new birth"; but the Bible explains that there is only one baptism, **one way to enter Christ's kingdom** (Eph. 4:4, John 3:3, 5). Friends, there is a difference.

The kingdom of God is built by and upon the love of Jesus, who poured out His blood. The church that belongs to Christ is a matter of God's planning and

prophecy. If these things do not make a difference, then what does?

And finally, dear reader, you can be a part of God's great kingdom. Come to Jesus on His gracious terms. Enter into the spiritual kingdom of Christ (Acts 2:38).

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"Jehovah saith unto my **Lord**, Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalm 110:1)

"Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou art a **priest** for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4)

"And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of **Jehovah's house** shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and **all nations shall flow unto it**. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for **out of Zion** shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah **from Jerusalem**. And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, **neither shall they learn war any more**." (Isaiah 4:2-4)

"Jesus answered, **My kingdom is not of this world**: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 8:36)

"Giving thanks unto the Father... who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into **the kingdom of the Son** of his love" (Col. 1:12-13)

"Wherefore, receiving **a kingdom that cannot be shaken**, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe:" (Heb. 12:28)

Please complete the Home Bible Study questions page for this lesson, then send it in to be checked. After checking it, we will return it with the next lesson in the series. If you have any questions please write them down and let us know. We are here to serve you and will point to the Bible for the answer to all things.

**HOME BIBLE STUDY #7**

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