

A WORD STUDY OF THE "KINGDOM" ON EARTH

Southern Illinois Preachers Workshop

INTRODUCTION.

- A. This lesson was delivered to the preachers meeting called the Southern Illinois Preacher's Workshop.
- B. Thank-yous, appreciations and acknowledgements.
- C. Charles Clark has asked me to address this group today on the topic of the "kingdom on earth." This is a basic word study.

I. DEFINING THE WORD.

- A. I believe we "unwittingly succeed in sterilizing much of Jesus' powerful preaching when we unequivocally identify the phrase 'kingdom of God' with the church." [1]
- B. The word kingdom comes from the Greek *basileia* with a primary meaning of "royal power, kingship, rule, reign, or domain." Not so much as to mean "realm" but a "rule or reign."
- C. "In the Old Testament the phrase 'kingdom of God' shows clearly that it expresses God's activity in ruling rather than the area or realm over which He rules, although of course the latter meaning is not excluded." [2]
- D. Alexander Campbell thought that the Greek *basileia* would best be translated as reign.
- E. Lexicons, dictionaries and Bible encyclopedias all basically agree that the word "kingdom" (*basileia*) means rule or reign. Theologians, historians and translators also concur. [3]
- F. For the earthly, human king there is corresponding earthly, human kingdom. In this sense *basileia* means, according to context, the office of king (Lk. 19:12; 19:15; Rev. 17:12) and also the area governed, or domain (Mt. 4:8; Lk. 4:5; Mk. 6:23; Rev. 16:10). In almost all these passages the earthly kingdoms stand in contrast--though this often unexpressed--to the *basileia tou theou*, kingdom of God, since they are subject to "the god of this world" the *diabolos*, devil. [4]
- G. I have found some 154 times the word is used in the New Testament with the following breakdown:

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Matthew = 55. | 7. 1Corinthians = 4. | 13. 2Timothy = 2. |
| 2. Mark = 19. | 8. Galatians = 1. | 14. Hebrews = 3. |
| 3. Luke = 44. | 9. Ephesians = 1. | 15. James = 1. |
| 4. John = 4. | 10. 1Thessalonians = 1. | 16. 2Peter = 1. |
| 5. Acts = 8. | 11. 2Thessalonians = 1. | 17. Revelation = 6. |
| 6. Romans = 1. | 12. Colossians = 2. | |

II. USES OF THE WORD "KINGDOM."

- A. There is a concrete and abstract use of the term kingdom. The concrete has reference to a territory, space or area. The abstract use deals with the concept of reigning, ruling, authority, power and wisdom. [5]
- B. However some passages do not say the kingdom is near in a temporal or spacial sense. For example in Mk. 12:32-34 Jesus meant that this scribe was not far from a personal submission to the rule of God. [6]
- C. Foy E. Wallace in God's Prophetic Word recognized three basic uses of the word kingdom. [7] They are:
 - 1. The universal sense.
 - 2. The eternal sense.
 - 3. The church sense.
- D. May we look at these three more closely;
 - 1. The kingdom universal.
In this sense of the word, all mankind are within the kingdom (rule or reign) of God. [8] God's universal kingdom include the physical universe too. Plants, animals, wind, water, all the

elements are under His control. God gave man dominion over the plants, animals and elements and God cannot give what He does not have. God's universal kingdom is one over all (Gen. 1:26; Psa. 8:3-6). Angels also do His bidding, see 1Chr. 28:18; Psa. 18:10. Countries like Assyria obey, yet they do not know it (Isa. 10:5-8). When Joseph's brother plotted evil against him, God still ruled (Gen. 45:5-7; 50:20). Even governments, earthly kings and rulers are second to God alone (see numerous passages in Daniel) and see Rom. 13:1. [9]

2. The kingdom eternal.

All of the redeemed of all ages shall be members of this kingdom. Abraham, Elijah and John the Baptist are members. This eternal kingdom is taught in the New Testament in the following places; Mt. 13:43; 25:34; Lk. 13:28; Ac. 14:22; 1Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; 1Pet. 4:11. [10]

3. The kingdom church.

In this sense the church and the kingdom are the same. Those who obey Christ and are added to the church are also then members of the kingdom (Jn. 3:3-5). God's rule is outwardly manifested in men who do His will--submit to His rule. The kingdom as it refers to the church is mentioned in Mt. 16:18,19; Mk. 9:1; Lk. 19:14,15,27; Col. 1:13; 1Th. 2:12; Heb. 12:28. The kingdom of God in the thinking of Jesus and the apostles is the rule or reign of God. The gospel of that kingdom is to bring people under that rule (see 2Cor. 10:5). [11]

- E. For Jesus, the advent of the kingdom (church) was so imminent that He vowed not to "drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes" (Lk. 22:18; Mk. 14:25). Jesus proclaimed the imminent advent of the kingdom of God within the lifetime of His hearers' generation (Mk. 9:1). [12]

III. **SOME OBSERVATIONS BASED ON THE DEFINITION AND USAGE.**

- A. First, one may be a member of the kingdom-universal and not a member of the kingdom-church. For example: Socrates, Stalin, George Washington are members of the kingdom-universal but not members of the kingdom-church.
- B. Second, one may be a member of the kingdom-eternal and not a member of the kingdom-church. For example: John the Baptist, Abraham and Isaac are not in the kingdom-church, but are in the kingdom-eternal.
- C. Third, all wicked men and all righteous men live side by side in the kingdom-universal until the end of time (1Cor. 5:9,10; Mt. 13:40-42).
- D. Fourth, before Pentecost (of Ac. 2), the entire world was God's kingdom, the kingdom-universal (Psa. 47:2,7) yet at the same time Israel was God's kingdom in a special sense, kingdom-Israel (1Chr. 28:5; Ex. 19:5,6; 1Sam. 12:12; Jud. 8:23; 2Chr. 9:8. After Pentecost (of Ac. 2), the entire world is the kingdom (rule or reign) of Christ (the kingdom-universal) (Matt. 28:18; Jn. 17:2), yet at the same time in a special sense the church is the kingdom, the kingdom-church (Col. 1:13,14).
- E. Fifth, we must study the immediate and total context carefully in reference to "kingdom" in order to determine precisely in which sense it is meant and intended. [13]
- F. Therefore, for the purposes of this study I am dealing with four kingdom designations and the remainder of the discussion will deal with only two of them:
1. The kingdom-universal (God's reign in the OT, Jesus' reign in the NT).
 2. The kingdom- eternal (God's reign in heaven after this life).
 3. The kingdom-Israel (God's reign to His chosen people of the OT).
 4. The kingdom-church (Christ's reign to His chosen people of the NT).

IV. **THE KINGDOM ON EARTH--OLD TESTAMENT ISRAEL.**

- A. The passage found in Exo. 19:5ff puts Israel in a special kingdom relationship with God. Israel had been subject to God before this time at Sinai (Ex. 15:18).

- B. In this earthly kingdom (kingdom-Israel) special covenants were made to bring mankind back into the proper relationship with God. There are three that I would like to mention:
1. The covenant with Abraham.
A covenant made long before Sinai (Gen. 11:31-12:3).
 2. The covenant with Moses.
Now that we have the kingdom of Israel within the universal kingdom of God, this particular covenant of Moses made with Israel is used to help fulfill the covenant made with Abraham (Exo. 19:5,6).
 3. The covenant with David.
The kingdom of David was the kingdom of God on earth, His earthly kingdom (1Chr. 29:9-11). An important note here is that whoever sat on David's throne, ruled the kingdom of God. It was not the littleness or greatness of the power exercised or the realm governed, but did the one ruling (king) did so according to the covenant right belonging to David and his family. If the king had such a right, he ruled with Davidic authority (Psa. 89:3-37).
- C. Within the Davidic covenant was punitive elements and clauses. The division which occurred after Solomon and went through Babylonian captivity was predicted (see Psa. 89:3-37). Various kings, including some Gentiles ruled Israel, but the prophets assured the people that the kingdom (sovereign powers) would be given back to Israel someday.
- D. This is where the book of Daniel comes in. God was assuring the Israelites in the writings (and preaching) of Daniel that the Davidic covenant still stood and that it had not been violated. During the fourth great world power to come, namely the Roman empire, God would return the rule to the saints and that that kingdom would not be overthrown (Dan. 2:44; 7:17,18). [14]

V. THE KINGDOM ON EARTH IN THE GOSPELS.

- A. The new and distinctive factor about the kingdom, which Jesus taught in the gospels, is that the kingdom is inextricably bound up with Himself. Not only is the kingdom at hand (Mt. 4:17), but Jesus is at the center of it.
- B. The verdict to be passed on men in the final judgment is already determined by the attitude they adopt to Jesus in the present age. [15]
- C. The gospel accounts tell us the following about the kingdom:
1. It is to be ruled by Jesus Christ (Lk. 1:31-33).
 2. The time is fulfilled and the kingdom is at hand:
 - a. There were good Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah (Mt. 13:38).
 - b. There were bad Jews who had every right to the kingdom, but would be thrown out due to unbelief (Mt. 8:10-12).
 - c. There would be Gentiles whom would be granted the kingdom (Mt. 8:11).
 - d. Jesus, in a scathing denunciation, said the true father of the unbelieving , Jews was the devil and not Abraham (Jn. 8:32-44).
 - e. Although not in the realm of this study, Jesus would also rule over those who are "not in this world" such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Mt. 8:11).
 3. It is to be a restored kingdom for the Jew first, see the limited commission (Mt. 10:5-7).
- D. The gospels also tell us three very important things about the "structure" of this kingdom;
1. There are conditions to be met in order to enter (Jn. 3:3-5).
 2. It will be a spiritual, earthly kingdom (Lk. 17:20,21; Jn. 18:36).
 3. The apostles are part of the reign/authority of Christ in the kingdom (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:29,30). [16]
- E. Specifically, Jesus said the following about the coming kingdom in which He was to rule on David's throne (Lk. 1:31-33; Ac. 2:30-36):

1. It is a miraculous kingdom.
Man can, therefore, neither hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God by doing battle with God's enemies (as the Zealots hoped). Nor force it to appear by scrupulous observation of the Law (as the Pharisees hoped). He can only await its coming with patience and confidence, as in the parables of the mustard seed (Mt. 13:31f; Mk. 4:30ff), the leaven (Mt. 13:33), and the seed growing secretly (Mk. 4:26-29).
2. It is an earthly nationalistic kingdom (or Messiah).
As found in many of the parables as He compares it to feasts, banquets, and says it is not coming with signs to be observed (Lk. 17:20).
3. Israel to play a key role in the kingdom.
It is the will of Jehovah to reach the whole world through the nation of Israel. This is not to necessarily say that in the earthly kingdom the Israel at this time has a special claim on God's favor. Indeed Israel is in danger of being put to shame by the heathen (who will enter the kingdom) on the day of judgment (Mt. 12:42; Lk. 11:31). The kingdom will be taken from Israel and given to the Gentiles (Mt. 21:43) and God will cast the disobedient sons of the kingdom-Israel into outer darkness (Mt. 8:12; Lk. 13:28). Jesus does promise the apostles the places of judges (rulers) in the kingdom-church (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:28ff; Mk. 10:35-45).
4. One must decide to enter the kingdom.
Under the terms of the kingdom-Israel, one was born into it, when physically born a Jew; however, in the kingdom-church one must decide whether or not to enter it. He must become like a child (Mt. 18:3,4) and experience a new birth (Jn. 3:3-5). Other passages on what Jesus said about entering the kingdom are Mt. 5:20; 7:21; 19:23f; 23:13. The decision is not a result of mere enthusiasm but is to be made after careful consideration (Lk. 14:28-32) and this decision should not be born of a rigid fanaticism, but against a background of overwhelming joy at the greatness of God's gift (Mt. 13:44-46).
5. Jesus arrived to show us the kingdom.
It is in Jesus Himself that we see what the kingdom is to be like. The kingdom-church is patterned after Jesus Himself as we see Him seeking out the company of tax-collectors and sinners, offering them fellowship at table and so promising them forgiveness of their sins. As:
 - a. The king invites to his feast the beggars and homeless (Mt. 22:1-10).
 - b. The father's love receives back again the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32).
 - c. The shepherd goes out after the lost sheep (Lk. 15:4-7).
 - d. The woman searches for the lost coin (Lk. 15:8-10).
 - e. The master out of the goodness of his heart pays the laborers hired at the last hour the full day's pay (Mt. 20:1-15).
 So Jesus goes to the poor to give them the promise of forgiveness, "for their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:3). Only sinners, who know what it is like to have a great burden of guilt, can appreciate the remission of sins through the goodness of God (Lk. 7:41-43; Mk. 2:17; Mt. 9:12; Lk. 5:31).
6. The distinctive feature of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God.
It is not that He brought a new doctrine, or that He revolutionized the people's expectations (although He did both), but that He made the kingdom-church inseparable from Himself as Son of God, Messiah, and Savior. No other previous king could make such a claim. [17]

VI. THE KINGDOM ON EARTH--THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.

- A. God's kingdom on earth today is the church (Ac. 20:28; Rev. 5:9,10).
- B. The apostles still had some misunderstandings about the kingdom before Pentecost (Ac. 1:6), but evidently understood it after being led into all the truth by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Ac. 2:30-39).

- C. Those who believed in premillennialism today still misunderstand it. [18]
- D. The kingdom-church can be tied to the kingdom-Israel with only three passages:
 - 1. Zechariah 6:12,13 (a kingly priest, and a priest on the throne).
 - 2. Luke 24:44ff (Jesus teaches of His Messiah-ship, as from the prophets).
 - 3. Hebrews 1:3:
 - a. Jesus made purification of sins. a priestly work.
 - b. Jesus offered Himself, a suffering work.
 - c. Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, kingly authority. [19]
- E. There is a continuity between the kingdom-Israel and the kingdom-church. This is found in the book of Hebrews:
 - 1. An old deliverer (Moses) and a New Deliverer (Jesus Christ).
 - 2. An old rest (Sabbath) and a new rest (Kingdom-eternal).
 - 3. An old high priest (Aaron's family) and a new high-priest (Jesus Christ).
 - 4. An old sanctuary (the temple) and a new sanctuary (the church).
 - 5. An old sacrificial system (of blood of goats and bulls) and a new sacrificial system (the once-for-all offering of Jesus Christ).
 - 6. An old covenant Law (of Moses) and a new covenant (the Law of Christ).
- F. The Hebrew writer speaks of a "new" because there is an "old." He speaks of a "second" because there is a "first" (Heb. 8:7-9:1; Jer. 31:29-34).
- G. Since the vast majority of the nation of Israel rejected Jesus as the promised Messiah, the remnant receives the kingdom (Lk. 12:32; Rom. 11:7). That faithful remnant constitutes the new commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2:12), the new holy nation (1Pet. 2:9) into which the Gentiles are invited and made fellow-heirs (Rom. 11:16-25; 15:27; Eph. 2:19-22). [20]

CONCLUSION.

- A. This has been a study of the kingdom, namely the earthly kingdom as expressed in OT Israel and the NT church.
- B. We have discussed:
 - 1. The definition of the word "kingdom" (from the Greek, *basileia*) meaning to rule or reign,
 - 2. That there are 3 even 4 uses of the word 'kingdom' in the Scriptures:
 - a. The kingdom-universal.
 - b. The kingdom-Israel.
 - c. The kingdom-church.
 - d. The kingdom-eternal.
 - 3. It is possible to be a member of one, but not any of the others, and that the kingdom-Israel and kingdom-church are of this study of earthly-kingdom.
 - 4. That the kingdom-Israel was dealt with by God through three great covenants:
 - a. The covenant with Abraham (made before Israel became a nation).
 - b. The covenant with Moses (given at Mt. Sinai).
 - c. The covenant with David (which looked ahead to Jesus Christ).
 - 5. That the kingdom in the gospel is:
 - a. To be ruled by Christ.
 - b. Its time was at hand and was fulfilled.
 - c. It is a restored kingdom to the Jews, and
 - d. To have heavy prominence in the preaching of Jesus.
 - 6. That the kingdom-church is now founded on the covenant of Christ for the Jew first then the Gentile.
- C. Thank-you for your kind attention and opportunity to address you on these most interesting subjects.

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WORD STUDY OF "KINGDOM" ON EARTH
for
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS PREACHER'S WORKSHOP
February 20, 1989
by
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INTRODUCTION.

- I. DEFINING THE WORD "KINGDOM."
 - A. From the Greek *basileia* meaning rule or reign.

- II. USES OF THE WORD "KINGDOM."
 - A. "Kingdom-Universal."
 - B. "Kingdom-Israel."
 - C. "Kingdom-Church."
 - D. "Kingdom-Eternal."

- III. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE DEFINITION AND USAGE.
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- IV. THE KINGDOM ON EARTH--OLD TESTAMENT ISRAEL.
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 - B. The covenant with Moses.
 - C. The covenant with David.

- V. THE KINGDOM ON EARTH--IN THE GOSPELS.
 - A. What do the gospels say?
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- VI. THE KINGDOM ON EARTH--THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.
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CONCLUSION.