

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

The church of Christ, which is the kingdom of Christ, is the greatest institution in all the world! It was built by Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 16:18). It was purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). The church is made up of all the saved (Ephesians 5:23). It will be given back to God, the Father, at the second coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). Therefore, only those who are in His church (kingdom) will be saved.

The church was planned by God from eternity! False teachers tell us that Jesus came to establish a kingdom on this earth. They say He failed because the Jews rejected Him. Therefore, He set up the church as a substitute. He will come the next time to set up His kingdom. This is not true! Christ came at the right time (Galatians 4:4,5). He set up the church (kingdom) as God had planned before the earth was created: *“To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Ephesians 3:10,11).

The church was promised by God to the great men of old. God told Abraham He would make a great nation from his seed. All the earth would be blessed by his seed (Genesis 12:1-3). Christ is the promised Seed of Abraham Who blessed all nations by dying for our sins (Galatians 3:16). Christians (members of the church and citizens of the kingdom) are the true children of Abraham (Galatians 3:26-29).

God also promised David that He would raise up his son to sit on his throne and rule over his kingdom: *“When your days are fulfilled, and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever”* (2 Samuel 7:12,13). This promise to David was fulfilled in Jesus Christ Who came of David’s seed (Luke 1:30-33; Romans 1:3).

The church was prophesied by men of God in the Old Testament! God told Isaiah: *“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”* (Isaiah 2:2,3).

Please notice four things in this prophecy:

- (1) The Lord would build His house;
- (2) It would be built in the *“latter days;”*
- (3) All nations would come into it;
- (4) It would be built in Jerusalem.

God’s house is His church (1 Timothy 3:14,15). The *“latter* (or ‘last’) *days”* is the period of time from the first to the second coming of Christ (Hebrews 1:1,2).

Daniel also foretold the coming of God’s kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a great image which had a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, and legs and feet of iron and clay. Daniel interpreted the dream for him (Daniel 2:31-45). The head of gold represented Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar’s

kingdom. The breast and arms of silver represented the Medo-Persian Empire which conquered Babylon. The belly and thighs of brass represented the Greek Empire established by Alexander the Great. The feet of iron and clay, the fourth kingdom, represented Rome. Of Rome, Daniel said: “***And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed . . . and it shall stand forever***” (Daniel 2:44). The kingdom of God would be set up when Rome ruled the world.

The prophet Joel foretold the coming of the kingdom also. He said that God would pour out His Spirit in the last days. Whoever called on the name of the Lord would be saved. There would be deliverance (salvation) in Jerusalem (Joel 2:28-32). Please notice four things in this prophecy: (1) It would take place in the last days; (2) God would pour out His Spirit; (3) It would be in Jerusalem; (4) Those who called on the name of the Lord would be saved.

The coming of the kingdom was prepared by John and Jesus! John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Christ (Malachi 4:5,6; Matthew 11:14). John was not in the kingdom, but prepared for its coming (Matthew 11:11). John preached that the kingdom was “***at hand***” (Matthew 3:1,2). This means it was very near.

Jesus also prepared for the coming of His kingdom. He too preached it was at hand (Matthew 4:17). He taught His disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom (Matthew 6:10). He sent His disciples out to preach that the kingdom was at hand (Matthew 10:7). He promised to build His church and to give the keys of the kingdom to Peter (Matthew 16:18,19). This passage shows the church and the kingdom are the same. Keys are used to unlock and open. Therefore, when we see Peter use the keys we will know the kingdom has come.

Jesus made a two-fold promise to His disciples: “***Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power***” (Mark 9:1). Please notice two things: (1) Some of those who were living when Jesus was on the earth would see the kingdom come; (2) The kingdom would come with power.

The church came in perfection on the first Pentecost day following the ascension of the Lord (Acts 2). Jesus commanded His apostles “***not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now’***” (Acts 1:4,5). He also told them: “***But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you***” (Acts 1:8).

When Pentecost came, the apostles were together in Jerusalem. They were all baptized in the Holy Spirit. When a crowd gathered, some heard the apostles speaking in tongues and said they were drunk. Peter pointed out that Joel’s prophecy of the pouring out of God’s Spirit had been fulfilled (Acts 2:1-21). Peter then preached the crucified Lord. He showed how that God had raised Jesus up to reign with Him on His throne (Acts 2:22-36). The Jews were “***cut to the heart***” and cried out “***What shall we do?***” Peter then used the keys of the kingdom by announcing the means by which one enters the kingdom: “***Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ...***” (Acts 2:38). That day, three thousand souls obeyed the Gospel and were added by God to the church (Acts 2:41; 47). The church is spoken of as being in existence for the first time. After this, it is no longer future. It is present (Acts 8:12; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9). The prophecies of Isaiah 2, Daniel 2, and Joel 2 are fulfilled in Acts

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- (1) It was in the last days;
- (2) God built His house (church or kingdom);
- (3) It was during the days that Rome ruled;
- (4) God poured out His Spirit;
- (5) Salvation was available to those who called on the name of the Lord;
- (6) It was during the lifetime of Jesus' disciples;
- (7) The power came when the Holy Spirit came;
- (8) It was in Jerusalem.

The church of Christ, which is the kingdom, was planned by God before the foundation of the world. It was promised to Abraham and David. It was foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament. John and Jesus prepared for it. It came in perfection on Pentecost. Men entered it by hearing and believing the Gospel, repenting of their sins, and being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

The kingdom has come. You can be a member of it today if you will be born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5). When Jesus comes again, He will deliver His kingdom back to God (1 Corinthians 15:24). Will you be in it?