

THE KINGDOM

by Douglas W. Hill

THE KINGDOM IN PROPHECY: In the time of Daniel, Judah was carried away from their land due to their sins. During this time, God sent a dream to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. In order to find a true interpretation to his dream, Nebuchadnezzar challenged his magicians to 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)!

Daniel prayed to the True God in order to find out the dream and its interpretation. When God did so, Daniel went to the Babylonian king and 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), 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 Greece, a "fourth kingdom as strong as iron" would come; yet its feet and toes would be a mixture of iron and clay (i.e. weak) (2:41-43). This 4th kingdom referred to Rome, which would "wear out the saints of the Most High" (7:23, 25). During the days of that fourth kingdom, God would set up a



kingdom "which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44).

Other prophecies include: The ruler of this unshakeable kingdom would be BOTH king & priest (Psalm 110:1-4); a 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). 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). Jesus told people 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); they would open the doors & allow people to enter this spiritual kingdom. Were these lies?

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). Since 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**.

Furthermore, this kingdom was established in the time of the Romans (Luke 2:1; 23:1-2), just as Daniel had said (Dan. 2:44). The law of Christ, the Gospel, went forth from 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 death.

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 "Premillennialism" (as it is called) focuses on (4) a physical, earthly kingdom; rather than a spiritual one. Finally (5), 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 thrown down as a temporary measure, until a later

kingdom is built? No. The church IS the spiritual kingdom of prophecy.

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM. As briefly mentioned above, Jesus said He would give the "keys" of the kingdom to the apostles (Matt. 16:19). This means they would be the ones to open the door to the kingdom. Thus, just as Jesus taught that one must be born again, "born of water and the spirit" to enter the kingdom (John 3:3, 5); the apostles taught the *same* thing. 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" by instructing sinners 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 our response to the word by "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.

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 the power of baptism? **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 an act of faith, a spiritual plea & appeal to God.

Sadly, many today reject the word of God on this subject. Often this is because people have been indoctrinated against "doing something" in connection with salvation. They have been told that *all* "doing" is an attempt to earn salvation. This just isn't so (James 2:14-26). Also, many reject the idea that any particular church is better than another. Yet, how can the one Jesus died for be considered no different than the ones built and designed by men (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28)?

CONCLUSION: There are many churches today; only one is founded and 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 **ruled and regulated by the word of Jesus Christ** alone. Several have used physical force or political power to establish and maintain themselves; only one is truly a **spiritual kingdom**. Many have their own versions 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). To deny these differences is to deny the Scriptures, and the Savior who shed His blood.

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).

North Sparta church of Christ
359 N. Spring St. • Sparta, TN 38583

[Http://NSCOC.Info](http://NSCOC.Info) • (931) 836-3321
Preacher@NSCOC.Info

"Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God!" (John 3:5)