

## The Kingdom Of God Still Stands!

**"And He will reign over the house of Jacob, and of His kingdom there will be no end."  
- Luke 1:33**

I once heard someone that that he knew that the church was a divine institution - if it had not been the brethren would have destroyed it long ago. He may have been close to right.

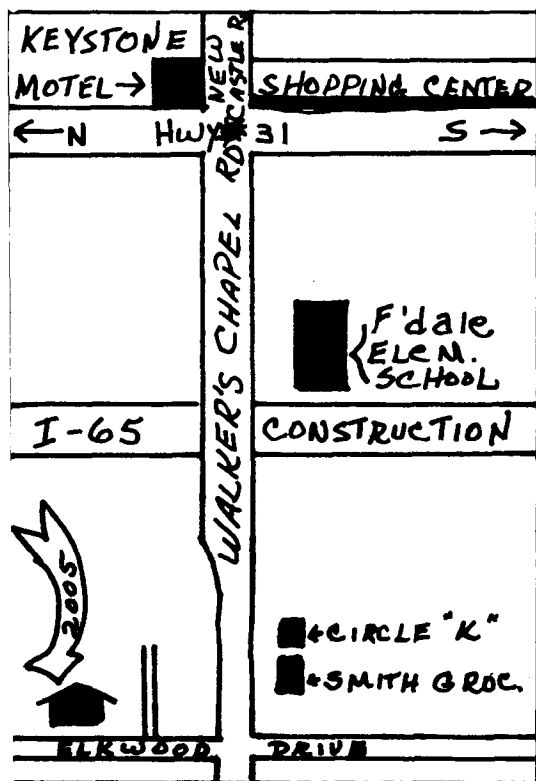
In my judgment, one of the most damaging things to the church, is our own pessimism. To hear a lot of us talk, one would think that the Lord's church - His kingdom - is on the verge of collapse. It is

one thing to be concerned about any threat to the church, but it is another thing to think and act like because of these threats that the Lord's cause is on the verge of going down the drain. It is not so! As the song says, "The kingdom of God shall stand".

I am not calling for that Pollyannaish optimism, observed in some, that ignores problems and treat threats as trivial matters. On the other hand, I believe that, in the face of our problems, our mood often becomes too negative. Our outlook, in many cases, becomes

too fearful and doubtful. Our speech becomes too problem-oriented. Let two informed brethren talk about the church for long and see if the conversation is not dominated by problems and fears tied to the problems. We seem to lose sight of the promises and power of God. Maybe we should, as the politicians sometimes say, look at the record.

The word of God is still with us, as promised. (1 Pet. 23-25). The kingdom of God is still with us, as promised. (Dan. 2:44; Luke 1:33; Matt. 16:18-19). If, after nearly 2000 years, this



## GOSPEL MEETING

Irven Lee

NOVEMBER 11 - 16, 1984

7:30 NIGHTLY (Including Sunday)

Fultondale Church Of Christ

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is so - inspite of all the problems and threats of the past - why should we not be optimistic about the future of the church? Why should we not be more upbeat than down-beat about the kingdom of God? Even if I am just a natural pessimist, I will have to admit that so far the kingdom of God has survived.

So far, no power on earth has been able to destroy it. The combined power of the Roman Empire and the Jewish leadership did not keep the church from being established nor could they destroy it after its establishment. That is a matter of record. They tried to prevent its establishment by killing the prospective King. It was still established. They tried to wipe it out by official persecution. It survived and flourished under their persecution.

So far, false doctrine and deception have not destroyed it. This has done more damage that all the persecuting powers combined, but it has not destroyed the church. Brethren are warned in advance that false teachers will find their way into their midst and draw away disciples after them. (2 Pet. 2:1 ff). Brethren are warned against encouraging such in any way. (2 John 9) and to faithfully preach the word to prevent such teachers gaining a foot-hold. (2 Tim. 4:1-4). Paul even warned of a great apostasy (1 Tim. 4). But, in spite of that major apostasy, which we believe resulted in Catholicism, and other departures from the faith after false and deceptive teachers - the church is still with us. The kingdom of God still stands. There are still people who are working and worshipping together just like they did before that apostasy ever happened - just like you

read about in the New Testament when the church was under the personal direction of the apostles.

So far, internal problems have not destroyed it. One of the marks of the New Testament church was not that it was problem-free. We seem to think that church problems were invented in recent years. In fact, nearly any problem that comes up in any congregation today has been faced, in principle, by brethren many times in the past - and the kingdom of God is still here!

The very first congregation - ever - had internal problems. Two of its members conspired to perpetrate a fraud upon the brethren. (Acts 5). They were struck dead for their sin - for all the world to see. This church had a problem that caused quite a stir over neglected widows. Those problems were solved and the church survived.

There was a big dispute in Antioch and Jerusalem between brethren over a doctrinal matter. (Acts 15:1-2,7). After that, two leading men who were on the same side in that dispute (Paul and Barnabas) got into such an argument over a matter of judgment that they would up "parting from one another" as they went out to preach the gospel (Acts 15:36-41). Another leading brother, the one given the keys of the kingdom, let some racism show through, acted hypocritically and had to be publicly rebuked. (Gal. 2:14ff). But, all of these problems were overcome and the kingdom of God still stands. A big portion of the New Testament was written to point out and deal with internal problems among brethren in the early church. Especially note, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, the epistles to the

Thessalonians, and the letters to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation. They tell of problems among brethren such as open fornication, lawsuits between brethren, confusion over spiritual gifts, corrupting the Lord's supper, brethren who would not work but were evidently free-loading off others, lukewarmness, teaching lewdness as a matter of doctrine, etc. Yet, so far, the kingdom of God still stands.

Brethren, let us recognize any problems we may have. Let us work on them. Let us try to solve and overcome them. But, let us get out this pessimistic mood that I see so much of among us and remember that we are indeed in "kingdom that can not be moved" (Heb. 12:25). Let us not let pre-occupation with problems and threats to blind us to the great good that is being done by brethren all over the world - not keep us from rejoicing in that good to the fullest.

Yes, there are problems among brethren - almost everywhere. This has been so from almost the very beginning. But, so far, the kingdom of God is still with it - and will be. It has survived all the problems and threats of the past 19 centuries - it will survive the problems of today, and tomorrow - if the Lord lets there be a tomorrow. If not, then the kingdom will delivered up to the Father. If we will just "be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" our "labor will not be in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58). How can be be so pessimistic, in view of all of this?

If we will "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" - everything is going

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# "Judge Righteous Judgment"

**"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" - John 7:24**

Christians **must** judge. In the same chapter with Jesus' often quoted command, "judge not", is the admonition to "beware of false prophets, who come ... in sheep's clothing". (Matt. 7:1, 15). How can we do this without judging that **somebody** is false? How can we mark, avoid, and reject factious men (Tit. 3:10; Rom. 16:17), unless we judge them to be such? The church at Corinth was rebuked for **not judging** as it should. (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 6:1-5).

It should be obvious by now that the Lord was not forbidding **all** judging, but a **certain kind** of judging. The next few verses show that it is hypocritical (double-standard) judging that is the object of his condemnation.

Some of the most scathing judgments that we have heard spoken against brethren has been by those who have judged that others has violated the "judge not" passage! Thus, violating the passage with their double-standard judgment.

Jesus specifically enjoined "righteous judgment" upon us.

"Appearance" is from a word meaning: "1. seeing, sight. 2. face, countenance. 3. the outward appearance, look.", according to Thayer's Lexicon. The idea is that one should look at more than what may first appear on the surface before judging.

Jesus had been hastily and harshly judged as a Sabbath breaker. At another time, His disciples had been so judged. (Matt. 12:1-7). On the surface, it may have had that appearance - but when viewed in the light

of all the facts it was not so. Jesus said, "But if you had known what his means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned (judged) the guiltless." The critics had judged according to appearance (by that which first met the eye or that which seemed to be, on the surface) rather than looking deeper into the matter. Had they probed deeper into the scriptures, rather than making that snap judgment, they would have known that the mercy passage took precedence. If they had honestly considered all the facts in the case they would not have condemned the innocent. They would have judged righteously. They needed to learn that things are not always as they seem to be - sometimes, maybe, but not always.

It is much easier to prejudice or to make snap judgments from what appears on the surface than to take the time and effort to gather the information needed to judge righteously. If we would more carefully get all the scriptural information bearing on the incident, all the facts about the incident itself, and any extenuating circumstances (such as ability and opportunity) that might bear on the incident then we would be less likely to "condemn the guiltless".

The critics of Jesus' disciples in Matt. 12, did not consider all the scriptures bearing on the alledged wrong before judging. Sometimes we do not consider all the circumstances in an incident. We heard of an elder who was severely criticised by a member of the congregation for not speaking to him when they met on the street.

When approached about the matter, the elder admitted that he likely had failed to speak to this brother. You see, the elder was kind of preoccupied at the time - he was on his way to the funeral home to make arrangement for the burial of his mother!

Sometimes faithful brethren are unrighteously judged by well-intentioned brethren without considering all the scriptures and circumstances bearing on the incident. A brother may openly and publicly sin for many to see and hear; some faithful brother feels that he cannot let it pass without withstanding sin on the spot. The one who did the rebuking is judged a sinner because he did not tell him his fault between "thee and him alone" - without considering that the sin was not a private matter, between "thee and him alone", but was already open before the public and the church, for saint and sinner to see - like the one done by Peter that caused Paul to say what he had to correct him before all. (Gal. 2:14 ff.). If the critic would consider all the Bible says, he would judge more righteously.

Brethren have differences that result in open disputes. It is easy for a third party to make snap or prejudicial judgments in such cases. In this we should be extremely careful - lest we condemn ourselves by judging unrighteously and add fuel to a fire that may already be too hot. It is easy for us to assume that one of the parties is the offender in the case, because we have known him to have been guilty is some other, but unrelated matter - thus,

prejudge him. It is easy and takes less time to just say that all parties to the dispute are wrong and should repent. It may, indeed, prove out to be that way. But, it is unrighteous judgment to make that judgment without knowing (not assuming) the facts in the case.

In some cases the most righteous judgment that one can make is to decide not to judge in the matter. There are some disputes that are simply none of my business - even disputes among brethren. I am in good company when I refuse to be a "judge or divider" in the matter. (See Luke 12:13,14). I don't know where some good brethren ever got the idea that they must take a stand (one way or the other) in every dispute between brethren that they may hear about. If it an issue over what the Bible teaches about a subject - that would be one thing. I can and should always study such a controversy and take a stand on what the Book teaches. But in disputes over what brethren may have said or done - that is is different matter. Sometimes with all the evidence one can gather, one still honestly cannot determine who really did or said what. And if one did he still might might not have any business in it - better leaving to the parties involved to settle. (Yes, I know that there are times when the parties are unable to settle their differences that, rather than go

to world's courts, it is better to get a brother to act as judge in the matter. -- 1 Cor. 6.)

Having said all of that, we still need to be careful about dismissing a dispute with the blanket indictment: "They are all probably wrong". That is the easy way out, but it is not right. Good men have been involved in controversies that were not of their making. Because of their involvement they have been unfairly associated with troublemaking and strife in the minds of many brethren. Such unfair and unrighteous judgment would have indicted Elijah, Paul and even our Lord. I can just hear the brotherhood tongue - waggers as they blame both Elijah and Ahab for the problems between them, or both Paul and Peter for the incident at Antioch, or both Jesus and the Pharisees for their differences.

After careful consideration of all the available evidence, it may well be that the judgment will be the same - but then it will be righteous judgment and not judgment based on prejudice or a snap judgment based on misinformation or no information. Even a correct judgment without a proper basis is unrighteous judgment.

- Editor.

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### VISIT OUR SERVICES

**KINGDOM** - Concluded.  
to be alright. There is just no reason to be pessimistic or overly apologetic about the state of the kingdom of God!  
- Editor.

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### PUBLIC DISCUSSION

January 14,15,17,18 are the dates scheduled for a public discussion between Edward O. Bragwell, Jr. and Roger Jackson over the Orphan Home and Limited Benevolence Issues.

It is to be in building of the church of Christ at "E" & Quintard in Anniston at 7:00 each night.

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### SERVICES

#### Sunday:

Bible Study...9:45 A.M.

Worship...10:45 A.M.

Worship...6:00 P.M.

#### Wednesday:

Bible Study...7:30 P.M.

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