

Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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Church/Kingdom Reflections

By
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Informed students of the Bible know well that there is much confusion in the world relative to the idea of the Kingdom of God. Some feel it is future, while others affirm it to be a present reality. Some look to a return of Christ to the earth to reign from Jerusalem on David's throne for a period of 1,000 years. Some teach the church and kingdom to be one and the same entity while others deny it. Some affirm that the church was not prophesied in the Old Testament and others affirm that it was. Such is but a part of the confusion that abounds on the subject.

Jesus used the church and the kingdom as interchangeable entities in Matthew 16. He promised to build His church and He promised to give to Peter the keys to the kingdom. "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH; and the

gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I WILL GIVE UNTO THEE THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:18-19. I have placed caps for emphasis and have used the ASV in quotations).

The Bible shows us that

the church and the kingdom are one and the same by the way it presents to us the Lord's supper. When Jesus instituted the supper He stated the following: "For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins. But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I DRINK IT NEW WITH YOU

IN MY FATHER'S KINGDOM" (Matt

26:28-29). The duration of the supper was for this world, until He come again. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death TILL HE COME (I Cor. 11:26). It is also significant that this passage to the church at Corinth shows to all with eyes to see that the place where the supper was eaten was in the church (I Cor. 11:23-34). Yet the Lord said in establishing the supper that it would be eaten in the FATHER'S KINGDOM. Does it not follow that

Passages for Thought

"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: . . ." (Matt. 16:19)

"But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29).

"Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2).

"There are some here of them that stand (by), who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1).

"For thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:11).

". . . that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21).

the church and kingdom were united in the mind of Christ and the revelation given to the Apostle Paul?

FIVE PHASES OF THE KINGDOM

The Bible presents the kingdom of God to us in a developing stage which I have chosen to label as phases of the kingdom. We can not fully appreciate the church and kingdom until we have at least some idea of what this involves.

1.

In The Mind of God

The church/kingdom was in the mind of God from eternity. It was in His eternal purpose for our redemption before the world was created according to Paul (Eph. 1:3-11). God in infinite wisdom knew that when He made man (a free moral agent), that man could sin and would need a saviour. In this infinite wisdom the plan of salvation was proposed and the Bible presents its unfolding.

2.

In Prophecy

The prophets kept before man the unfolding of God's scheme of redemption, His coming kingdom. It would proceed from the seed of woman (Gen. 3:14-15), through the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12) and through the seed of David (II Sam. 7:12-17). There are many passages which depict the plan of God. Consider Psalm 2; Psalm 110; Isaiah 53 and the words of Daniel. "I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to

the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13-14).

3.

Preparation

The kingdom and/or church entered its final preparatory state beginning with the preaching of John the Baptist. "And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (3:1-2). Jesus and His disciples continued this preparatory message. "From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 4:17). "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into (any) way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 10:5-7). Jesus pinpointed the conclusion of the days of preparation in the words of Mark 9:1: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand (by), who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power."

4.

Present Reality

The days of preparation ended and the kingdom/church became a reality on the first

Pentecost following the resurrection of the Christ. In Acts 2 the power came when the Holy Spirit came and as Jesus stated this would be the coming of the kingdom. He had told the Apostles to wait for this event in Jerusalem and that it would soon come (Acts 1:3-8). In Colossians 1:13 we read of people being placed in the kingdom. John the Apostle talks of himself as being in the kingdom (Rev. 1:9). These passages and the letters to the churches and early Christians make us aware of the present reality of the kingdom of Christ.

As the prophets foretold He is now a priest upon His throne. "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build the temple of Jehovah; even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. 6:12-13). If this is denied then we have no sacrifice for sin; we have no high priest to whom we may go and we have no king over the spiritual kingdom of God.

The Harvesters

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5. Eternal Phase

While it is true the kingdom has a present reality this does not mean that it is in the final state. This will not be realized until redemption is completed. Man is composed of body, soul and spirit (I Thess. 5:23). Man was made good in the beginning and any view of man that does not consider the total person is not complete. Our present mortal state will not permit us to enjoy that final reality. This mortal must put on immortality for flesh and blood can not enter the kingdom in the heavenly phase. Study carefully First Corinthians 15:50-58. Peter directs us to the final phase of the kingdom and our entrance into the same in the following words: "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet 1:10-11). Immoral conduct may become a factor in our lives and keep us from entering the completed phase of the everlasting kingdom (Gal. 5:19-21).

Conclusion

When we study the kingdom of God we should consider what phase of development the writer has in mind. If we do not we will fail to grasp the true significance of that kingdom. Some have so focused on material things that they can only conceive of the kingdom being an earthly kingdom. Israel of old was a type of the coming reality. To look for a earthly

kingdom of material territory is to fail to understand God's eternal purpose. Matthew uses the term Kingdom of Heaven some thirty-two (32) times to state what he was affirming relative to the kingdom. Those who understand the book of Matthew know that he was writing to convince the Jews that Jesus was the son of Abraham and the son of David and is the Son of God. Jesus affirms that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are one and the same in the following verse. "And Jesus said unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the KINGDOM OF GOD" (Matt 19:23-24).

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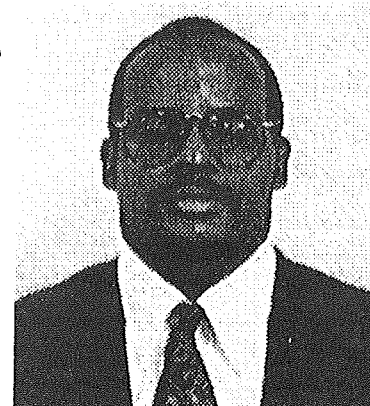
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The theme is good indeed and could mean the way of reaching people with the truth -- people who will not attend church otherwise.

December Graduate



Rodney Daniels

Rodney Daniels is a single man from Dearing, Georgia. He started his studies at Memphis School of Preaching and transferred to Florida School of Preaching in the spring of 1995.

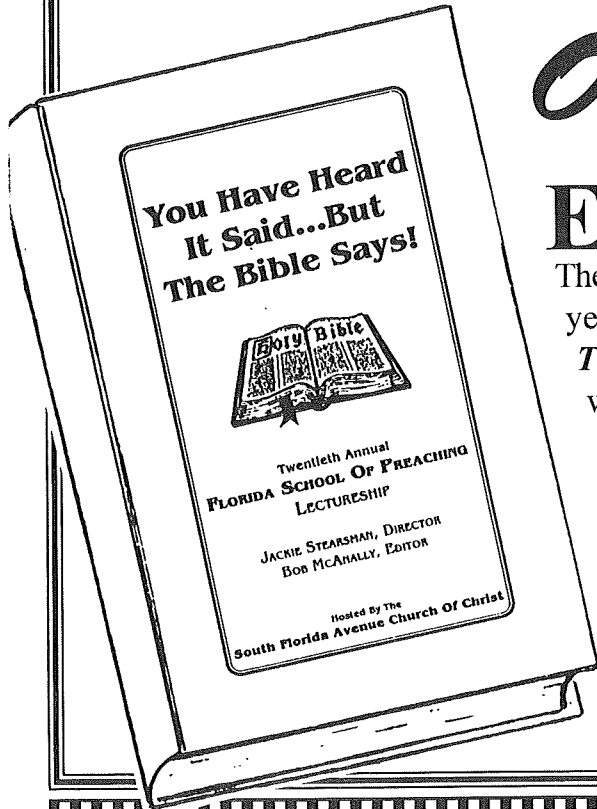
While a student here, he worked part-time as he finished up his courses. He also worked with the Medella Church of Christ as assistant preacher.

At the conclusion of the fall semester, Rodney will be returning to his home congregation in Georgia to serve as the preacher.

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