

# LESSON 12

## **Fact #2: Israel Became a Special Kingdom Within the Universal Kingdom of God (Exodus 19:5-6)**

Israel became a special kingdom within a kingdom.

Moses recognized that God was king (and therefore had a kingdom) at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. In Exodus 15:18, Moses looked at the dead bodies of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and he declared that God was the eternal king.

**Exodus 15:18** — *The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.*

Yet Israel was not yet a kingdom in Exodus 15. This changed in Exodus 19:5 when God began to view Israel as a separate kingdom that was special to him (long before King Saul was placed on the throne).

**Exodus 19:5-6** — *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.*

Here in chapter 19, we see God promising to enter into a special kingdom relationship with Israel.

God was not giving up any sovereignty. He was not reducing the size of his kingdom. Indeed, he affirms in verse 5 that “all the earth is mine.” He was simply entering into a special relationship with Israel.

Although God reigned over the entire universe as king, God chose a special people, and he called that special people a kingdom. They became a kingdom within a kingdom. We are going to see this happen again later in our lesson.

### **Fact #3: God Promised to Establish an Eternal Kingdom and He Told Us When He Would Do So (Daniel 2:44)**

Although Israel was a special kingdom of God, God promised that there would one day be another special kingdom. (We will learn in a moment how these two special kingdoms are connected.)

As the earthly kings of Judah and Israel descended into wickedness and rebellion, the prophets began to speak of the kingdom of God in future terms.

Although God is always king and always exercises his kingship, the prophets said there would be a time in the future when the kingdom of God would be manifested among his people in a special way.

**Isaiah 24:23** — *Then the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed; For the LORD of hosts will reign On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His elders, gloriously.*

**Zechariah 14:9** — *And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be — The LORD is one, And His name one.*

We see this most clearly in Daniel 2:44.

**Daniel 2:44** — *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

Something else we learn from Daniel 2 is that this eternal kingdom would not be made with human hands. Daniel 2:45 describes that eternal kingdom as “the stone [that] was cut out of the mountain without hands.” Jesus told us the same thing.

**John 18:36** — *My kingdom is not of this world.*

As did the writer of Hebrews.

**Hebrews 12:28** — *Let us be grateful for **receiving** a kingdom that cannot be shaken.*

The world is full of man-made religious organizations — none of them could possibly be the eternal kingdom promised in Daniel 2 because that kingdom was not made by human hands.

#### **Fact #4: God Made a Covenant with King David Regarding the Kingdom (Psalm 89:3-4)**

God made a covenant with King David that is still in force today.

Psalm 89 is a crucial chapter in our study of the kingdom.

**Psalm 89:3-4** — *I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, 4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.*

This covenant is called the Davidic covenant. It is separate from God’s covenant with Abraham, and it is separate from the Mosaic covenant.

The prophets spoke of a day when a son of David would sit on the throne of David and the Mosaic covenant would NOT be in force!

In Zechariah 6:9-13, the prophet placed a crown on the High Priest and then referred to him by the Messianic title “the Branch” (Isaiah 11:1). Thus, he pictured a son of David (from the tribe of Judah) as the High Priest.

Yet, under the Mosaic covenant the High Priest could be only from the tribe of Levi. (See also Hebrews 7.) Thus, the picture in Zechariah 6 could not become a reality while the Mosaic covenant remained in place.

Similarly, in Psalm 110:1-7, we see that Messiah would be “priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” Likewise, this passage could not be fulfilled while the Mosaic covenant was in force — and yet Acts 2:29-36 tells us that it was fulfilled in the first century.

Premillennialists argue that the Mosaic covenant will return during the so-called 1000 year reign of Christ. And yet, Hebrews tells us that Christ is our High Priest. Jesus cannot be our High Priest under the Mosaic covenant.

We also see from Psalm 89 that the Davidic covenant had a punitive element.

**Psalm 89:30-34** — *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; 31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; 32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. 33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.*

History tells us that for a long time the house of David did not rule over the kingdom of Israel. Instead, the kingdom was first divided, and then the two halves were taken into captivity by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. But the prophets looked to a restoration of that former kingdom of David.

**Amos 9:11** — *In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.*

Why did the prophets look for a restored kingdom of David? Because the covenant with David remained in force even while sons of David were no longer ruling. That is what Psalm 89:34 tells us. The Davidic covenant remains in force today.

### **Fact #5: Jesus Reigns as King Today Under the Davidic Covenant (Luke 1:31-33)**

Jesus reigns today under the Davidic covenant.

Isaiah and Luke tell us that Jesus would rule a kingdom while sitting on the throne of David.

**Isaiah 9:6-7** — *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.*

**Luke 1:31-33** — *And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

And John tells us in Revelation that Jesus was ruling with Davidic authority during the first century.

**Revelation 3:7** — *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that*

*is true, **he that hath the key of David**, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.*

But while Jesus sits on the throne of David in the restored kingdom, his reign is universal in scope. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus rules the Universe from the throne of David. Every person on earth today (including every Arab in the Middle East) is ruled by a son of David!

A second thing we learn from Luke 1 is that the eternal kingdom is a restored kingdom. Luke 1:32 tells us that Jesus did not get a new throne. He received the throne of his father David. His kingdom is a restored kingdom (“and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David”).

**Amos 9:11** — *In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.*

Those are phrases of restoration!

**Acts 2:30** — *Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.*

**Acts 15:15-16** — *And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.*

The kingdom of the gospels is a restored kingdom! It is not a new kingdom, but is instead the Davidic kingdom of Psalm 89. There is certainly much about this kingdom that is new (as Jesus said repeatedly), but the kingdom itself is a restored kingdom.

We hear a lot today about the restoration movement, but that was not the first restoration involving the church. The first century church itself began as a restoration movement! (Luke 1:32, Amos 9:11, Acts 2:30, Acts 15:15-16)

### **Fact #6: The Eternal Kingdom Spoken of by Daniel was Established in the First Century (Mark 9:1)**

Daniel told us very clearly *when* the eternal kingdom would be established. As we saw earlier, Daniel writing 600 years before the fact, told us that in the days of the Roman empire God would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed.

Jesus also told us very clearly *when* the eternal kingdom would be established. The New Testament did not waste any time in telling us when the eternal kingdom would be established. Jesus began his ministry by announcing that the time for the kingdom was at hand.

**Mark 1:14-15** — *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

Later, Jesus told his listeners that some of them would be around to witness the establishment of the eternal kingdom.

**Mark 9:1** — *And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.*

In fact, the Bible tells us the very day when the eternal kingdom was established. Acts 1:6-8 is one of the most important passages in the Bible regarding the kingdom.

**Acts 1:6-8** — *When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore*

*again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*

Although this passage is one of the most important passages in the Bible regarding the Kingdom, we often discount it. Why? Because for some reason we have concluded that the apostles were confused and were still looking for an earthly kingdom in Acts 1.

There is no reason to believe that the apostles in Acts 1 misunderstood the nature of the kingdom — and there is every reason to conclude that they knew by that time exactly what type of kingdom was about to be established.

**Luke 24:45** — *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.*

The next four verses in Luke 24 quote Isaiah and point directly to the events in Acts 2. Do we really think the apostles were confused about that in Acts 1 after having had their minds opened by Jesus in Luke 24?

**Acts 1:3** — *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*

They had just had a 40 day class on the kingdom taught by the master teacher himself! Further, Jesus' answer gives absolutely no indication that the apostles were mistaken in their view about the kingdom.

So, if we assume that the apostles actually knew what they were talking about in Acts 1, what then can we learn about the kingdom from that passage?

Verse 6 confirms that the kingdom is a restored kingdom, and it tells us that the kingdom had not yet been restored. The apostles spoke of it as a future event.

Verse 8 tells us how we could know when it was restored. Jesus told them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Remember that Mark 9:1 told us the kingdom would come with power, and remember that the Holy Spirit fell with power upon the apostles in Acts 2.

**Luke 24:49** — *And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

Acts 1 is a bridge between the gospel accounts and the establishment of the kingdom. The eternal kingdom spoken of by Daniel 600 years earlier was established in Acts 2 on the first day of Pentecost following the resurrection.

### **Fact #7: The Eternal Kingdom Spoken of by Daniel is the Church of Christ (Matthew 16:16-19)**

So far we know that God established an eternal kingdom in the first century. But we also know that Jesus built a church in the first century. How are the church and the eternal kingdom related?

Jesus clearly identifies his church as the eternal kingdom in Matthew 16.

**Matthew 16:16-19** — *Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And 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.*

One commentator wrote “Jesus preached the kingdom, and the church came” as if the two were unrelated. Yet here Jesus identifies his church with his kingdom.

There is no indication of a change in subject between verses 18 and 19. The church in verse 18 is the kingdom in verse 19.

We know this as well from Acts 2. It was there that the church was established, and it was there that Peter unlocked the door to the eternal kingdom by preaching the first gospel sermon. The eternal kingdom is the church of Christ.

If you are using this list of facts to teach someone about the church, you may get some push back when you get to this one. How can you say the kingdom is the church of Christ only? What about the Methodists, the Baptists, the Catholics, etc. etc.?

That question is a teaching opportunity! You could refer to my car as the car of Eric. You could refer to my house as the house of Eric. You could refer to my iPhone as the iPhone of Eric. Look again at Matthew 16:18 — Jesus said, “I will build my church.” Jesus owns a church. We can refer to it as the church of Christ. That is all we mean by the phrase “church of Christ.” We mean nothing more by it. It is the church that belongs to Christ.

What is it about the phrase “church of Christ” that causes such controversy? When we see “house of Chloe” in 1 Corinthians 1:11 do we agonize over whether to capitalize “house”? How about the blood of Zacharias in Matthew 23:35, the mouth of David in Acts 1:16, the shadow of Peter in Acts 5:15, and the household of Narcissus in Romans 16:11? Don’t those phrases just mean Zacharias’ blood, David’s mouth, Peter’s shadow, and Narcissus’ household? Why can’t we just take “church of Christ” to mean Christ’s church? We know from Matthew 16:18 that he has one. Isn’t that exactly how the phrase is used in the Bible — churches of Christ in Romans 16:16 and church of God in 1 Corinthians 1:2? Those are phrases of ownership!

How many churches does Christ own? The Bible tells us of only one. Matthew 16:18 mentions only one. And that church is sometimes called the body of Christ in the

Bible — how many bodies does Jesus have? Only one. Daniel 2 mentioned only one eternal kingdom.

Hebrews confirms that the church is the eternal kingdom. At the end of Hebrews 12, the author describes a kingdom that had already been received, and he describes it in the same way that Daniel described it in Daniel 2.

**Hebrews 12:28** — *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.*

Here is how Foy Wallace described it:

Daniel's kingdom is indestructible. Paul's kingdom is immovable. If they are not one and the same thing, how can Paul's kingdom be moved to let Daniel's kingdom begin?

The writer of Hebrews tells us that the church cannot be moved or shaken, and that it is received by man — not created by man. These are the same two things that Daniel told us about the eternal kingdom 600 years earlier.

Daniel also confirms that the eternal kingdom is the church.

**Daniel 7:13-14** — *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, 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.*

Notice that the Son of Man in Daniel 7 is pictured as going to the Ancient of Days, not coming from the Ancient of Days. Daniel 7 is describing the ascension of Jesus Christ in Acts 1 — not the return of Christ at the end of the world.

And the kingdom in verse 14? That kingdom is the church that was established in Acts 2. It is the same eternal and indestructible kingdom that Daniel told us about in Daniel 2 — the one that Daniel told us would be set up during the Roman empire. It is the same immovable kingdom that we see in Hebrews 12. It will not pass away; it will never be destroyed.

That eternal kingdom is the church of Christ; the Lord's church; the one body. God said that he would establish it, and he said when he would establish it. And God did what he said he would do! How could any Bible-believer reach any other conclusion than that the promised eternal kingdom is the church that Jesus built and that was established in the days of the Roman kings?

Like Israel, the church (the eternal kingdom) is a kingdom within a kingdom. Jesus has all authority and reigns over the Universe from the throne of David as the King of kings. Yet, the church (the eternal kingdom) consists only of those who are in God's favor. Those in rebellion against God are in his universal kingdom, but they are not in the eternal kingdom; they are not in the church. They are in God's universal kingdom because God created them, but they do not enjoy a special relationship with God.

### **Fact #8: There are Conditions for Entry into this Eternal Kingdom (John 3:3)**

God has established conditions for entry into the eternal kingdom.

**John 3:3** — *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

We enter the universal kingdom of God with our first birth. We enter the special kingdom within a kingdom with our second birth.

In Acts 2, those who heard the first gospel sermon wanted to know what they had to do to be saved. They were asking Peter what they had to do to enter this eternal

kingdom of Jesus Christ — his church. Peter told them to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. There are conditions for entry into the eternal kingdom — but entry is open to all who will obey their Lord and King.

Notice that Peter did *not* tell his listeners in Acts 2 that they needed to make Jesus Lord of their life or crown him King. In Acts 2:36, Peter told them that Jesus was already their Lord! And in Acts 2:30, Peter told them that Jesus was already their King! They needed to obey his gospel (Acts 2:38), not to make him Lord and King, but because he is already both Lord and King!

**Fact #9: Christians are Today in the Eternal Kingdom (Colossians 1:13)**

God adds people to the church when they obey the gospel, and the church is the eternal kingdom.

**Acts 2:47** — *And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

**Colossians 1:13** — *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.*

**1 Peter 2:9** — *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

The church of Christ in Matthew 16 is the kingdom of Christ in Colossians 1:13. If you have been added to the church of Christ, then you have been added to the eternal kingdom of Christ. They are one and the same.

Is it possible to be saved outside of the church of Christ? If so, it is possible to be saved while outside of the body of Christ. If so, it is possible to be saved while outside of the promised eternal kingdom. When people are saved they are added by God to his church. How then could any saved person possibly be outside of the

church? Are those in the church of Christ the only people who are saved? Yes, of course they are! The only reason anyone has trouble with that statement is that they are thinking of the church of Christ as just another denomination.

But what if there is a group of Christians somewhere who read the Bible, do what it says, but call themselves the church of God? They are just as much the church of Christ as we are. And we are just as much the church of God as they are. The church of Christ is not our name; it is our description. And that description applies to any group of faithful Christians who follows God's word.

The church of Christ is the church that belongs to Christ. It is the body of Christ. It is the church that Jesus promised to build in Matthew 16 and that was established in Acts 2. It is the church to which God adds people when they are saved.

There is no lost person inside the church, and there is no saved person outside of the church.

### **Fact #10: One Day the Eternal Kingdom will be Delivered up to God (1 Corinthians 15:24-28)**

Despite what countless premillennial preachers have taught, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that Jesus is not returning to set up a kingdom. Here is a crucial passage in our understanding of the kingdom:

**1 Corinthians 15:24-28** — *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. ... 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

We are told here that the kingdom of Christ that began soon after his resurrection will experience a transition at the final resurrection. At that time, the eternal kingdom will be delivered to God.

Notice that verse 25 tells us that Jesus is reigning now — not that he will start to reign at some point in the future. When the eternal kingdom is delivered to God, Jesus will cease to reign as the Messiah, and he will start to reign instead as part of the Godhead (“that God may be all in all” in verse 28).

When Jesus comes again it will not be to set up a kingdom (as many teach), but instead will be to deliver up or hand over to God an already existing kingdom. Jesus already has an eternal kingdom — one purchased with his own blood — he does not need another one.

It is critical to recognize the continuity of the story of the kingdom from Genesis to Revelation. In Genesis, we discovered that God rules over the Universe as its King and Creator. In Exodus, God made Israel to be a special kingdom within a kingdom. As we read in Psalms, God made a covenant with David that is still in force today. Jesus began his earthly ministry by announcing that the kingdom of God was at hand. That kingdom was established in Acts 2. (We read about it in Daniel 2, Isaiah 2, and Joel 2.) Today, God is reigning over the Universe through Jesus, the Messiah, who reigns under the Davidic covenant.

Those who are in God’s favor are part of a restored kingdom, which is the promised eternal kingdom of Daniel 2. Although established with power in Acts 2, it was established as a restored kingdom, with Jesus reigning on the throne of David. This eternal kingdom is the church of Christ in Matthew 16.

At the end of time that special eternal kingdom, the church, will be delivered to God, and those outside the eternal kingdom will be eternally lost.

## Conclusion

Perhaps if we called the church the kingdom more often, it would help us see the church as God sees the church.

It is often said that Revelation was written to help us understand what heaven looks like even though we have never seen it. But is that really the case? I think that, instead of describing heaven, Revelation 21 and 22 are describing the church here and now. If so, then God is not describing something we can't see, but rather God is describing something we can see (the church) — and he is telling us that we are not seeing it right!

We are not seeing it as the beautiful, golden city of God that it is. The final chapters of the Bible are giving us God's view of his church!

Do we see the church as the eternal kingdom not built with hands that will sweep away all of the kingdoms of the earth? Do we see it as the immovable unshakable indestructible kingdom of Christ? Or do we see it as a footnote, as insignificant, as powerless in the great tide of history?

God ends the Bible by telling his people to open their eyes! He wants us to see the church as it really is! The church of Christ is the beautiful golden city of God shining forth the light of Christ in a world filled with darkness and despair. That is what the church was in Acts 2, that is what the church was during the Roman persecutions, and that is what the church is today. Perhaps our own limited view of the church is holding us back from being what God wants his church to be!

We have looked at ten facts about the kingdom. Let me end with an eleventh fact: Whether you are in the eternal kingdom or out of the eternal kingdom is the only thing that ultimately matters in this life.

We all live in the universal kingdom of God, but not everyone is in the eternal kingdom of Daniel 2 and Acts 2. That eternal kingdom is the most valuable thing that a

man could ever find or hope to find. Isn't that what Jesus told us in the kingdom parables of Matthew 13?

**Matthew 13:44-46** — *The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

Is the kingdom worth all that you have and all that you are? Yes, and in fact, it demands it! It must be our one goal and our one focus.

**Matthew 6:33** — *Seek ye first the kingdom of God.*

Our proper understanding of the kingdom is one more reason why we are distinctive and unique in a world that is awash with man-made churches. The church of Christ is not a man-made church; it is the eternal kingdom made without hands. And nothing is more important today than being in that kingdom.