

I. INTRODUCTION

A. There is a lot of confusion about the kingdom of God.

1. What is it? Where is it? When is it?
2. Some equate the kingdom with Heaven, and they tell us that we are not yet in the Kingdom.
3. Others equate the kingdom with a Premillennial Kingdom on earth that will not appear until Christ returns.
4. Some tell us that God intended to establish his kingdom in the first century, but things didn't go quite as planned, and so God postponed the kingdom, and in its place we have the church.
5. Some even tell us that the Sermon on the Mount describes how we will eventually live in this yet future kingdom, and that the Sermon on the Mount really does not apply to us today, but it might be a good idea to start living that way now anyway. You see this view in books such as "Kingdom Living Here and Now."
6. Some commentators say that the kingdom and the church are the same thing. Other commentators say that the kingdom and the church are different but overlap. Still other commentators say that the kingdom and the church are completely separate things.
7. Some say that Jesus is reigning today. Others say that Jesus has the right to reign now, but he is not exercising that right today. Some say the kingdom is with us now.

B. There is also a lot of confusion about the church.

1. When the New Testament was written, there was (as today) only one church, but the difference is that the one church in New Testament times was not (as today) surrounded by countless man-made religious organizations also calling themselves Christian.
2. Men today approach churches as they would food in a cafeteria line -- take what looks good, and if you don't like it, just take something else the next time you go through the line.
3. Ravi Zacharias (author of *The Real Face of Atheism*) tells the story of a man who was stranded all by himself on an island for 30 years. When he was finally discovered after all that time alone, his rescuers noticed that the man had built 3 huts on the small island. When asked what they were for, he said, "One hut is where I live. The second hut is where I go the church. The third hut is where I used to go to church."

C. As members of the Lord's church, our job is to cut through this confusion.

1. We know that God is not the author of confusion. Neither should God's people be the source of any confusion.
2. If we leave people confused and wondering what we are saying, then we have not done what we need to do in proclaiming God's word. Our job is to bring clarity rather than confusion.
3. How do we bring clarity? By our focus on the Bible. That is the only way to bring clarity to religious confusion.
4. Our goal today is to look at some clear facts about the kingdom of God lifted right out of God's word. Each fact is based on a key verse about the kingdom.

5. These are things all who believe God's word should be able to agree about. We can think of them as firmly planted tent pegs that we can use to assist us and guide us as we explore other issues about the kingdom. And they are good starting points if we want to teach someone else about God's kingdom.

D. Of course, we must be careful lifting verses out of the Bible.

1. Bibliomancy describes the practice of opening the Bible and selecting a verse at random to use as a guide for your life. We need to be careful we don't study the Bible that way. Each verse has a context, and we need to make sure we understand that context as we interpret that verse.
2. The term "kingdom" is used in many different ways in the Bible.
 - a. *In Matthew 8:12, Jesus refers to faithless Jews as the children of the kingdom.*
 - b. *In Matthew 12:26, Jesus tells us that Satan has a kingdom.*
 - c. *In Matthew 12:28, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God had already appeared.*
 - d. *In Mark 9:1, Jesus said that the kingdom would appear in the first century.*
 - e. *In Luke 21:31, we are told that the kingdom would come with the destruction of Jerusalem.*
 - f. *In Revelation 11:15, we find that the kingdom would come with the judgment of Rome.*
3. Are these statements contradictory? Of course not. They all are just speaking of either different kingdoms (such as Satan's kingdom) or different aspects and manifestations of the kingdom of God.
 - a. *In one sense the kingdom appeared when the king appeared.*
 1. This is the sense that the word is used, for example, in Luke 17:21 -- "for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." Jesus said that prior to the establishment of the church in Acts 2.
 - b. *In another sense the kingdom appeared when the king came in judgment against Jerusalem and against Rome. Those judgments were specific manifestations of the king coming in judgment.*
 - c. *In yet another sense the kingdom will appear when the king comes again to claim his own at the final judgment.*

E. The focus of these classes is why we are glad we are members of the Lord's church.

1. Of course, the main reason we are glad about being members of the church of Christ is that the church of Christ is the body of the saved. Those who have been saved have been added by God to his church; those who are lost have not.
2. But there are many others reasons to rejoice about being a member of the Lord's church, and one of them is because that church is the eternal kingdom of God that will sweep away all of the earthly kingdoms of this world.
3. If you want security and permanence, then you have only one choice when it comes to the choice of kingdoms.
4. Rome found this out the hard way. No one looking at the first century church from a purely earthly perspective would ever have thought that the church would outlive the mighty Roman empire. And yet that is what happened -- just as Daniel had foretold over 600 years earlier. (See my notes on Revelation and Daniel for more about that fascinating conflict.)

II. KINGDOM OR DEMOCRACY?

- A. As we enter our own political season, perhaps we should start with a threshold question: What is God's favorite political system?**
1. You would think that the answer must be a Democracy if you listened to many modern (and not so modern) flag-waving politicians and preachers.
 2. Everyone knows that Athens is the birthplace of democracy.
 - a. *That birth occurred around 500 BC, and it lasted for about 100 years. 100 years after that, Alexander was dead and his empire fragmented. Fast forward another 100 years, and Greece was at war with Rome, and we all know how that story ended.*
 - b. *In fact, Daniel told us in 600 BC how it ended, 100 years before democracy was born in Athens!*
 3. It is interesting that as Daniel tells us what would happen with the kingdoms of the world in the 600 years between his day and the first century, he skips right over the birth of democracy. (And yet, as we will see, Daniel does tell us about an eternal political system.)
 4. I think a good argument could be made that if God has a favorite political system, it is a monarchy rather than a democracy.
 - a. *Israel was a monarchy under God until they rejected him as king and sought an earthly ruler instead to reign over them.*
 - b. *The church (as we will see) is a monarchy as well.*
 5. But as with Israel, people today have rejected Christ as king and have replaced him with earthly rulers.
 - a. *Denominations today vote to determine truth, as if such a thing could be done.*
 - b. *Truth is not subject to the democratic process. Even a unanimous vote of men against God would not change the truth in the slightest.*
 1. Romans 3:4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.
 - c. *Many modern-day denominations operate as democracies, but the church is not a democracy. Instead, the church is an authoritarian system. What we do is governed by the authority of God as found in his word. Christ is our king; he is the head of his church.*
 6. What is it like to live in a kingdom, at least an earthly one?
 - a. *Samuel told us in 1 Samuel 8:11-18.*
 1. And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. 12 He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. 14 And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. 15 He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. 16 And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. 17 He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. 18 And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day."
 - b. *For starters, you pay a lot of taxes and you don't get to vote!*

7. The history of earthly kingdom does not present us with a very pretty picture, but that is because earthly kingdoms are ruled by earthly kings. Let's look instead the kingdom of God, which is ruled by a Heavenly King.

III. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A. Why should we study about the Kingdom of God?

1. A central theme of Jesus' teaching (and some say the central theme) was the kingdom of God. He spent much time talking about it, and many of his parables were directed toward it.
2. The word "kingdom" appears 342 times in the KJV. Of those appearances, over a third (127) are in the gospels. By comparison, the word "church" appears 3 times in the gospels, and the word "grace" appears 5 times in the gospels. Clearly, the kingdom was very important to Jesus. Shouldn't it then be of the utmost importance to us?

B. What does the Bible mean when it uses the word "kingdom"?

1. In Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, the primary meaning of "kingdom" is kingship. The word more often refers to the reign than to the realm in which the reign is exercised.
 - a. *For example, in Daniel 4:30-31, God told Nebuchadnezzar that the kingdom had passed from him. Babylon as a realm remained. What passed was Nebuchadnezzar's exercise of kingship over that realm.*
 - b. *Nebuchadnezzar did not become a king without a kingdom. Babylon became a kingdom without a king.*
2. But sometimes the word "kingdom" is used to refer to the realm as in the "kingdom of Judah."
3. The phrase "kingdom of God" in the Bible may refer either to God's kingship or to the realm over which God is king.

IV. FACT #1: THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS UNIVERSAL (PSALM 103:19)

A. God is King over all because He is the creator of all.

1. The first reference to a kingdom in the Bible is an *indirect* reference and occurs in Genesis 1.
 - a. *I say indirect because it does not mention the kingdom directly but instead shows God giving man dominion over a part of his kingdom.*
 - b. *Genesis 1:26 -- Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*
 - c. *The first key point to understand about the kingdom is that God is King, and the entire universe is included within his kingdom. If we ever find ourselves saying that God is king over some things or some people and not king over others, then we must have taken a wrong turn somewhere. God is king over all creation, and all creation is subject to him.*
2. David tells us that God is king over the whole earth.
 - a. *Psalm 47:2 --- a great King over all the earth.*

- b. *Psalm 103:19 The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.*
 - c. *Psalm 145:13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.*
 - d. *Psalm 29:10 The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood, And the LORD sits as King forever.*
 - 1. That last verse is important because it tells us that God is still King even when the world is in a mess. Some people today argue that Jesus cannot be reigning as King because the world is in such a mess. But wasn't the world in a mess at the time of the flood? God reigned (and rained!) as king then.
 - e. *Isaiah 37:16 connects God's kingship with his having made heaven and earth.*
 - f. *These verses were written during the monarchy of Israel. That is, King David tells us that God is king. Why is that important? Because it tells us that God did not abdicate his kingship when he set up earthly kings over Israel. God reigned then and he reigns today as King over all the earth.*
 - g. *How God reigns may change, however. At one time, he reigned through King David. Indeed, the throne of David and the throne of Solomon are often called the throne of God. Today he reigns through the Messiah.*
3. Even during the monarchy of Israel, God reigned over all the kingdoms of the earth.
- a. *Did you ever wonder why Jonah went and preached to Nineveh? Nineveh was full of Assyrians, not Jews. God reigned over Assyria just as he reigned over Israel.*
 - 1. From this we have a very important truth about the kingdom of God --- God is king over all without regard to whether they accept him as king. God rules the righteous, he rules the ungodly, and he rules the indifferent. He has a special relationship with the righteous, but he rules over all.
 - 2. Transgressing the royal law of God does not mean that God is no longer your king. It just means that you are no longer his faithful subject.
4. In the same way today, Christ is king over His church --- but he is not king just over the church. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He has all authority in Heaven and on earth. Jesus reigns over the entire universe and everything and everyone in it.

V. FACT #2: ISRAEL BECAME A SPECIAL KINGDOM WITHIN THE UNIVERSAL KINGDOM OF GOD (EXODUS 19:5-6)

A. Israel became a special kingdom within a kingdom.

- 1. 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.
 - a. *Exodus 15:18 "The LORD shall reign for ever and ever."*
- 2. 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).
 - a. *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.*
 - b. *Here in chapter 19, we see God promising to enter into a special kingdom relationship with Israel.*

- c. *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.*
3. 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.

VI. FACT #3: GOD PROMISED TO ESTABLISH AN ETERNAL KINGDOM AND HE TOLD US WHEN HE WOULD DO SO (DANIEL 2:44)

A. 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.)

1. 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.
 - a. *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.*
 - b. *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.*
 - c. *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.*
2. We see this most clearly in Daniel 2:44.
 - a. *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.*
 - b. *Daniel said that one day God would set up an eternal kingdom. When would this eternal kingdom be established? Daniel tells us that it would be set up "in the days of these kings."*
 - c. *A study of Daniel shows that "these kings" are the first century emperors of Rome. These kings did not arise until 600 years after the book of Daniel was written.*
 - d. *Thus, Daniel gives us a very important time frame for the establishment of this eternal kingdom. We will refer to this time frame later in our lesson.*

B. Something else we learn from Daniel 2 is that this eternal kingdom would not be made with human hands.

1. Daniel 2:45 describes that eternal kingdom as "a stone [that] was cut from a mountain by no human hand."
 - a. *Jesus told us the same thing in John 18:36 -- "My kingdom is not of this world."*
 - b. *As does Hebrews 12:28 -- "let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken."*
2. 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.

3. By the way, I think there is a close tie between the kingdom made without hands and the issue of instrumental music in worship.
 - a. *Acts 17:24-25 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.*
 - b. *Did you notice verse 25? God is not worshipped by human hands. The instruments that God wants to hear in worship are the instruments that He made! Our voices! What instrument made with hands could possibly be proper for worship in the eternal kingdom made without hands?*

VII. FACT #4: GOD MADE A COVENANT WITH KING DAVID REGARDING THE KINGDOM (PSALM 89:3-4)

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

1. We read about the God's covenant with David in Psalm 89 -- a crucial chapter in our study of the kingdom.
 - a. *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."*
 - b. *This covenant is called the Davidic covenant. It is separate from God's covenant with Abraham and it is separate from the Mosaic covenant.*
 - c. *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!*
 1. 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.
 2. 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.
 3. 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.
 4. 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.
2. We also see from Psalm 89 that the Davidic covenant had a punitive element.
 - a. *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.*
 - b. *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.*
 - c. *But the prophets looked to a restoration of that former kingdom of David.*
 1. 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.

2. 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.

VIII. FACT #5: JESUS REIGNS AS KING TODAY UNDER THE DAVIDIC COVENANT (LUKE 1:31-33)

A. Jesus reigns today under the Davidic covenant..

1. Isaiah and Luke tell us that Jesus would rule a kingdom while sitting on the throne of David.
 - a. *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.*
 - b. *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.*
 - c. *And John tells us in Revelation 3:7 that Jesus was ruling with Davidic authority during the first century. ("The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David...")*
2. 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.
 - a. *And this brings us to another important fact about the Davidic covenant. It is not the scope of the authority that determines whether the authority is Davidic.*
 - b. *David ruled 12 tribes and Abijah only 2 tribes, and yet Abijah was still able to say that he ruled the kingdom of Jehovah as a son of David in 2 Chronicles 13:8. ("And now you think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David...")*
 - c. *The size of the realm is not important. What matters is whether the king is from the line of David and whether he reigns with God's approval.*
 - d. *That Christ rules over more than David and Abijah ruled over less than David doesn't matter. Both ruled (and Jesus continues to rule) according to the Davidic covenant in Psalm 89.*
 - e. *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!*

B. A second thing we learn from Luke 1 is that the eternal kingdom is a restored kingdom.

1. 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.
2. 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.

3. 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.
4. 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!

C. One final point about this fact is one that should be self-evident, but that surprisingly is not: God crowned Jesus king; we did not.

1. Even though we sing all the time that we placed a crown on Jesus' head, we did not. "King of my life, I crown thee now. Thine shall the glory be." Really? Where did we get that idea?
2. Not from the Bible. The only crown that men ever placed on the head of Christ in the Bible was a crown of thorns.
3. The Bible teaches that Jesus is presently King of kings and Lord of lords (Acts 10:36, Rev. 17:14, Rev. 19:16), and the Bible teaches that it was God (not man) who crowned Jesus King (Heb. 2:5-9). We will receive a crown from Jesus, not the other way around. (1 Pet. 5:4)
4. Yes, we live in an eternal kingdom -- but no, we did not place the crown on the head of our eternal kingdom. We obey him because he is our king, not to make him our king.

IX. FACT #6: THE ETERNAL KINGDOM SPOKEN OF BY DANIEL WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE FIRST CENTURY (MARK 9:1)

A. Daniel told us very clearly when the eternal kingdom would be established.

1. 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.

B. Jesus also told us very clearly when the eternal kingdom would be established.

1. 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.
 - a. *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.*
2. Later, Jesus told his listeners that some of them would be around to witness the establishment of the eternal kingdom.
 - a. *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.*

C. In fact, the Bible tells us the very day when the eternal kingdom was established.

1. Acts 1:6-8 is one of the most important passages in the Bible regarding the kingdom.
 - a. *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.*

- b. *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.*
- c. *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.*
 - 1. Luke 24:45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. Further, Jesus' answer gives absolutely no indication that the apostles were mistaken in their view about the kingdom.
- d. *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?*
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. 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.
 - a) *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.*
- e. *Acts 1 is a bridge between the gospels 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.*

X. FACT #7: THE ETERNAL KINGDOM SPOKEN OF BY DANIEL IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (MATTHEW 16:16-19)

- A. **So far we know that Jesus established an eternal kingdom in the first century. But we also know that he built a church in the first century. How are the church and the eternal kingdom related?**
 - 1. Jesus clearly identifies his church as the eternal kingdom in Matthew 16:17-19.
 - a. *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.*
 - b. *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.*
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. 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.
 - 2. Hebrews also tells us that the church is the eternal kingdom.
 - a. *Hebrews 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*

- b. *Foy Wallace: "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?"*
 - c. *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 things that Daniel told us about the eternal kingdom.*
3. Daniel 7:13-14 also confirms that the eternal kingdom is the church.
- a. *13 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.*
 - b. *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.*
 - c. *Daniel 7 is describing the ascension of Jesus Christ in Acts 1 – not the return of Christ at the end of the world.*
 - d. *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.*
 - e. *That eternal kingdom is the church of Christ; the Lord's church; the one body.*
 - f. *God said that he would establish, 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?*

B. Like Israel, the church (the eternal kingdom) is a kingdom within a kingdom

1. Jesus has all authority and reigns over the Universe from the throne of David. 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.

XI. FACT #8: THERE ARE CONDITIONS FOR ENTRY INTO THIS ETERNAL KINGDOM (JOHN 3:3)

A. God has established conditions for entry into the eternal kingdom.

1. 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.
2. Matthew 7:21 -- Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.
3. 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.

B. Notice that Peter did not tell them that they needed to make Jesus Lord of their life or crown him King.

1. In 2:36, Peter told them that Jesus was already their Lord!
2. And in 2:30, Peter told them that Jesus was already their King!
3. They needed to obey his gospel, not to make him Lord and King, but because he is already Lord and King!

XII. FACT #9: CHRISTIANS ARE TODAY IN THE ETERNAL KINGDOM (COLOSSIANS 1:13)

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

1. Acts 2:47 And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
2. Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.
3. 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.
4. 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 kingdom of Christ.

B. Is it possible to be saved outside of the church of Christ?

1. If so, it is possible to be saved while outside of the body of Christ.
2. If so, it is possible to be saved while outside of the promised eternal kingdom.
3. When people are saved they are added by God to his church. How then could any saved person possibly be outside of the church?
4. Are those in the church of Christ the only people who are saved? Yes, of course they are!
 - a. *The only reason anyone has trouble with that statement is that they are thinking of the church of Christ as just another denomination.*
 - b. *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.*
 - c. *There is no lost person inside the church, and there is no saved person outside of the church.*

XIII. FACT #10: ONE DAY THE ETERNAL KINGDOM WILL BE DELIVERED UP TO GOD (1 CORINTHIANS 15:24-28)

A. Despite what countless premillennial preachers have taught, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that Jesus is not returning to set up a kingdom.

1. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 is a crucial passage in our understanding of the kingdom.
 - a. *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.*
 - b. *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.*
 - c. *Notice that verse 25 tells us that Jesus is reigning now – not that he will start to reign at some point in the future.*
 - d. *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").*
2. 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.
 - a. *Jesus already has an eternal kingdom – one purchased with his own blood – he does not need another one.*

B. It is critical to recognize the continuity of the story of the kingdom from Genesis 1 to First Corinthians 15.

1. In Genesis, we discovered that God rules over the Universe as its King and Creator.
2. In Exodus, God made Israel to be a special kingdom within a kingdom.
3. As we read in Psalms, God made a covenant with David that is still in force today.
4. Jesus began his earthly ministry by announcing that the kingdom of God was at hand. That kingdom was established in Acts 2.
5. Today, God is reigning over the Universe through Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who reigns under the Davidic covenant.
6. Those who are in God's favor are part of a restored kingdom, which is the promised eternal kingdom of Daniel 2. This eternal kingdom is the church of Christ in Matthew 16.
7. 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.

XIV. CONCLUSION

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

1. 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?
2. I think that, instead of describing Heaven, Revelation 21 and 22 are describing the church.
3. If so, then God is really describing something we can see (the church) – and he is telling us that we are not seeing it right!

4. 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!
5. Do we see the church as the eternal kingdom not built with hands that will sweep away all of the kingdoms of the earth?
6. Perhaps our own limited view of the church is holding us back from being what God wants his church to be!

B. We have looked at 10 facts about the kingdom. Let me end with an 11th fact: Whether you are in the eternal kingdom or out of the eternal kingdom is the only thing that ultimately matters in this life.

1. We all live in the universal kingdom of God, but not everyone is in the eternal kingdom of Daniel 2 and Acts 2.
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?
3. "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."
4. "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."
5. 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. We must see it as Jesus described it to us.

C. Yes, one reason I am glad that I am a member of the church of Christ is that the church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ.

1. Our understanding of that fact 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.