

God's Goal Being the Kingdom

The kingdom is one item of the **basic structure of the Scriptures**, but it has been neglected by most Christians. The kingdom is the pervading subject in the whole New Testament. It pervades nearly all the books from **Matthew through Revelation**. Although you may have been a Christian for years, you have probably heard very little about the kingdom. Although the preaching of the New Testament started with the kingdom, and the kingdom is a basic subject of the New Testament, it has been much neglected for centuries because of the subtlety of the enemy.

We have said in the past that the church is God's goal, but the ultimate goal of God is the kingdom, not the church. In eternity and for eternity God will have a kingdom. **The church is the main part of the kingdom**. Consummately, God will have the kingdom for eternity. When the Lord Jesus returns, the church, in a sense, will be completed, but the kingdom, which includes the church, will continue for eternity. God's ultimate and eternal goal is the kingdom. Satan, the enemy of God, knows God's goal. That is why he will allow you to do many things as long as you are not for the kingdom. **God's intention is to build up a kingdom; the enemy's intention is to destroy this kingdom**. The enemy will turn people to anything else as long as he can keep them out of the kingdom. If he cannot utilize sinful or worldly things, **he may use religious things**. As long as you are distracted from the kingdom, Satan will be satisfied.

“REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM”

The preaching of John the Baptist concerning repentance for the kingdom was not directed to the Gentiles; it was directed to God's people, Israel. His preaching was directed to the religious people who held the holy Word in their hands, the people who tried their best to worship God according to the Scriptures. **John did not say, “I am very happy that you are worshipping God. I am here to improve your worship to God. God has sent me to encourage you to offer sacrifices, to burn the incense, to light the lamps, and worship God by singing and praising and giving thanks.”** Instead, John preached to the religious people, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom.”

Where is God's kingdom? **The whole earth is filled with demons**. We have seen that the principle of a demon is rebellion. Although you may love your wife or submit to your husband or have a good family life, you may not be for the kingdom of God. Whatever you do and whatever you are may be altogether in the principle of a demon. The Lord intends to have a kingdom. Whatever you are, whatever you do, and wherever you go must all be under the ruling of His life. Your style of hair, your manner of dress, and everything else must be under the life-ruling of the Lord Jesus. That is the kingdom.

If you live in a brothers' house, it makes little difference whether you lose your temper or you are patient. If you lose your temper, that is an ugly demon. If you are nice and patient, that is a pretty demon if you are not under the ruling of the kingdom. Whether you lose your temper or you are patient, you are still rebellious against God. Even your silence, your patience, and your niceness may not be under the ruling of the Lord Jesus. Only that which is under the ruling of the Lord Jesus is in the kingdom.

How about your life? How about your daily living and your daily walk? You may be so good in the eyes of men, but **in the eyes of the Lord you are not under His ruling**. He still does not have a kingdom within you. You may be moral, you may be good, you may be gentle, and you may be religious, but you are not under the ruling of His life. There is no kingdom of the Lord Jesus within you. **I hope that the Lord Jesus will open our eyes** so that we may see the kingdom. The kingdom is not merely a dispensation or a sphere. The kingdom is simply the Lord Jesus sown into us, growing in us, ruling, governing, reigning, and becoming mature, until there is the harvest, that is, the manifestation of the kingdom.

THE GROWTH PROCESS OF THE KINGDOM

The Lord Jesus told us to pray, "Your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10). But the kingdom will not come in the way many Christians think. **In a sense, the kingdom has come already. In another sense, however, the kingdom is coming.** To pick up our illustration once more, in a sense, the carnation kingdom has come already in its seed form. One day, when the carnation reaches full bloom, that will be the full coming of the carnation kingdom. Similarly, the Christ kingdom has come already. From the day He sowed Himself into the human earth, the Christ kingdom began to come. The growth process will continue until the time of the full harvest, at which time there will be the full manifestation of the Christ kingdom.

What is the kingdom? The kingdom is simply Christ sown into us, growing in us, maturing in us, and reaching the time of harvest. The kingdom is not merely a dispensation or a sphere. **It is the totality of Christ being life to us in all His activities.**

If you visit a zoo, you can see the animal kingdom. Is that just a dispensation or a sphere? If you remove all the animals, the sphere remains, but that is not the animal kingdom. The animal kingdom is the totality of all animal life with all its activities. Birds are flying, monkeys are climbing, and turtles are swimming in the water. The animal kingdom is simply the totality of animal life with all its activities. Likewise, the kingdom of Christ is the totality of Christ being life to us with all His activities. We all have Christ within us as life, and we have many activities in Christ. This is the kingdom of Christ. Recently, I was

watching, observing, and enjoying so many activities of the members in the meeting. You may say that was a church meeting. I agree, but that was also the kingdom of Christ with His life and activities.

THE CHURCH BEING THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

We come now to Matthew 16:18-19. These were words spoken by the Lord Jesus to Peter after he received the revelation from the Father that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. He said that Peter was a stone and that He would build the church upon Himself as the rock. The gates of Hades can never prevail against this church. Then He told Peter that He would give him the **keys—not of the church—but of the kingdom**. This implies that the church in verse 18 is certainly the kingdom in verse 19, and that the kingdom in verse 19 is surely the church in verse 18. The Lord Jesus promised to give Peter the **keys of the kingdom of the heavens**. On the day of Pentecost the Lord Jesus gave Peter the key that opened the door for the **Jewish** people to come in; at the house of Cornelius He gave him the key that opened the door for the **Gentiles** to come in. After the Lord gave Peter these two keys of the kingdom, the churches were established. First, the church at Jerusalem was established, and later the church among the Gentiles was established. Peter used the keys of the kingdom to establish the churches; this indicates that the churches are the kingdom.

The church is the *ekklesia*, the assembly. This means that the church is the gathering together of the called people of God. The church is also the house of God, His dwelling place. It is also the Body of Christ, meaning that the church is the living expression of Christ. The church is also the bride of Christ, meaning that the church is His love and satisfaction. **In addition to all these aspects, the church is also the kingdom**. This means that the church is the **reigning of God** through Christ. The church is **the ruling of Christ** as a King. No requirements are higher than those of the kingdom. The requirements for the church to be the assembly or the house of God or the Body of Christ or the bride of Christ are not as high as the requirements to be the kingdom of God. **No requirements are higher than those mentioned in Matthew 5, 6, and 7**. The requirements of the kingdom are high because the church is the reigning of Christ, the ruling of Christ, as a King. If we all will realize that the church is the kingdom, **we will have a great change in our living**.