

THE CHURCH OR KINGDOM OF GOD

WHAT IS IT? WHENCE COMES IT? WHERE IS IT?

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"But seek ye first the kingdom of God." (a)
To obey the commandment given in this text is the duty of every man.

To seek for anything successfully, the seeker must have some knowledge of what it will be like when it is found; or must be able to comprehend the form and characteristics of that which is sought for, that he may perceive it when he finds it, and cease searching for it; hence, the first question,

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

The kingdom of God is that for which Christ taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come." (b).

The kingdom of God is the "Kingdom of heaven," referred to by the Savior,

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a 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." (c).

The kingdom is that for which men should seek as the Savior indicated,

"The kingdom of God is come unto you." (d).

It is also that which Christ referred to:—

"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." (e).

By this is announced the fact that John preached of the kingdom of God, when he taught the people, saying:

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." (f).

Again, the further fact is learned that

"Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." (g).

It is now not difficult to see that when Christ says to Peter, "Upon this rock will I build my church," (h), that

he intends to call the kingdom of God which men were to seek, the Church which should be built upon that rock.

There can be no kingdom where there is not a king; and when it is stated that men are to seek for the kingdom of God, it is to be understood to be one over which God shall be the king. And as men are commanded to seek for it upon the earth, it is certain that God, the king, intended that it should be found by them, that they might "press into it," while it was yet upon the earth.

It is usual in kingdoms that the king governs by personal intervention in the affairs of his subjects; or by a well chosen number of officers, who hold under the king authoritatively delegated power to act in the name of and for the king. Hence it is concluded, that if there be a kingdom of which God is king, that he has subjects, and that from among these subjects, he has chosen some who hold authority to act in his name. These chosen subjects cannot act in the name and for the king, unless there be a well authenticated code of laws to which they may severally have access, and a means of direct communication between the king and them, through which they might be enabled to act in accordance with the present will of the king.

The code of laws was furnished by God, the king, through Christ, when he came "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God;" from which it is evident that "the gospel" is the rule of spiritual conduct by which the subjects of the kingdom are to be governed.

In seeking for the kingdom, the Church of God, the seeker must look for the gospel as one of the characteristics of that which he is searching for.

In form, the kingdom of God on

[a] Matt. 6 : 33. [b] Matt. 6 : 10. [c] Matt. 13 : 44.
[d] Matt. 12 : 28. [e] Luke 16 : 16. [f] Mark 1 : 3.
[g] Mark 1 : 14. [h] Matt. 16 : 18.

earth must be what the king designed it should be; and if it is a church, that church must be in form the same as has been revealed or declared by the king.

Christ was the grand ambassador from the king, and came as the Messias.

"Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he." (i).

"And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me." (j).

As such, God, the King, acknowledged him.

"And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (k).

"Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." (l).

Christ having accomplished his part as an ambassador, became the Prince of life in the kingdom of God. So Peter declared him to be,

"And killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead." (m).

"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (n).

Princes reign by right of the kings whom they represent, and so did Jesus.

"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." (o).

They who seek the kingdom of God must look for one of which Christ is the ruling Prince.

The King and the Prince of this kingdom are both absent in person; the one holding the supreme government of the universe, the other a place at the right hand of his Majesty in the heavens, how then is this kingdom governed? By the gospel, or the law. How shall the gospel be administered, and the subjects ruled.

All governments have officers upon whom rests the responsibility of administering the laws; and each officer, in his respective position, represents just so much of the power of the government; and if it be a kingly govern-

ment, the king is the power so represented.

This is as true of the kingdom of God as of every earthly government; and therefore the law, the gospel, cannot be administered without representative officers acting under the "Prince of Life" by delegated authority from the King, who is, God the Father.

Whoever seeks for the kingdom, must look for one in which there are officers delegated of God, who are to be honored as the accredited representatives of kingly power and authority.

These officers are called of God:

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." (p).

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." (q).

When men seek for the kingdom they must needs look for apostles, prophets, and the other officers; for this is the will and rule of the King.

To enable these officers to act consistently in their calling they must become acquainted with the duties of their respective positions; and certainly, unless they are officers of a dead king, or of one who has long since ceased to care for his subjects, there should be means of inter communication between them. The king has bountifully provided for them in this particular.

"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." (r).

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth." (s).

"Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (t).

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (u).

The King though absent in person, has provided to be present with his subjects in the Spirit of his divine mind and will. So also has the Prince,

[i] John 4 : 26. [j] John 5 : 27. [k] Mark 1 : 11.
[l] John 12 : 28. [m] Acts 3 : 15 [n] Acts 5 : 31.
[o] John 12 : 50.

(p) 1 Cor. 12 : 28. (q) Eph. 4 : 11. (r) John 16 : 23
(s) John 14 : 16, 17. (t) John 16 : 13. (u) James 1 : 5

who came and went away, as he promised :

"For if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (v).

"And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (w).

Whoso, then, is seeking for the kingdom or Church of God will do well to search, if haply he may find it, for one that bears the form of an organized body of men, women and children, who are joined in one government having the form, Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, helps, governments, gifts of healings, miracles, diversities of tongues; and who recognize Christ as the Prince and power of Life, having been the ambassador by whom the King, God the Father, made himself manifest to the world, and has promised to continue to manifest himself; and, also, who believe and are at peace in the assurance that the Prince and King whom they delight to serve are ever present with them by the Spirit, and will watch over and protect them always.

WHENCE COMES THE KINGDOM?

It is clear that the kingdom is not of men, but is from God.

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." (x).

"My kingdom is not of this world." (y).

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." (z).

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (a).

Further evidence is not necessary to show that the kingdom, or Church, is and must be of God, in whatever period of time it may be on the earth.

WHERE IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

If it comes not with observation, and is in its character and form unlike the kingdoms of this world, in what corner of the globe—in the midst of what nation—among what people, and under what earthly government shall it be found?

The fact that Christ says that "my kingdom is not of this world," indicates that it does not properly partake

of the nature of an earthly government; and consequently, while it may exist under such government, it is not of it; it is therefore a spiritual kingdom. Hence the Apostle, says:

"For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (b).

The life which is given to the subjects of the King is eternal, and hence above and beyond the province and power of any earthly king to control or to give. The kingdom sought for will not be found in any of the kingdoms of this world.

The further fact that the gospel was to be preached to "all people" is significant that the subjects of the kingdom might be found, among them all, in this sense; that Jesus as the representative Ambassador, the Messiah, the Redeemer, should be preached as the Prince of the Kingdom of God, through the gospel of that kingdom, in all the world.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (c).

The kingdom for which men should look in its organized form, not being by its character likely to be a part or the whole of any earthly government, it is therefore a necessity that it should exist in the midst of that nation where freedom of religious opinion is greatest; and in no nation has there been from the first so much freedom of religious thought, so favorable an opportunity of time and circumstance to present the gospel to all nations as in the United States. It will therefore be more than likely that here the kingdom will be found.

The constitutions of the various churches claiming to be the Church of God, in the aggregate, or as separate and integral parts of a whole, should be examined in the search. If found lacking in the characteristics, or in the form, the claim is invalid and cannot in consistency be granted. If, on the contrary, any one of them is proved to answer to the form and characteristics, then must the claim receive consideration.

(v) John 16: 7. (w) Matt. 28: 20. (x) Luke 17: 20.
(y) John 18: 36. (z) Matt. 16: 19. (a) Luke 12: 32.

(b) Rom. 8: 2. (c) Mark 16: 15.

The real object in seeking for the Kingdom of God is necessarily to enter into it; and the salvation offered in the gospel of Christ is a citizenship in the Kingdom of God in eternal life. It is with great propriety then that the gospel is presented in connection with the kingdom; and that a close relationship between the subjects and the King is urged. Nor can it be possible that any man is justified in accepting, as the kingdom, any church, or number of churches, unless there should be found one having the requisites pointed out in the word of God, by the guidance of which only can men be safely led to the realization of their hopes of salvation.

Every man, in these days of many churches, must be prepared to answer for his hopes; and unless his hopes are based upon the "sound words" which Paul seems to have thought it was necessary for Timothy and others to hold fast to, he is not safe; therefore it becomes necessary, always, when seeking the kingdom, to examine the ground of the hopes of each claimant to the honor of being "the Church and Kingdom of God," so far as that ground of hope affects in any wise the salvation offered in the Scriptures, through the mediation of Christ.

With these things in view every one should take the Scriptures into close consideration; more especially such portions as point out man's duty with regard to his future state and the final happiness in the Kingdom of God. The Church must necessarily represent the power of God to save men, or there is no more necessity to join one than to join

any ordinary beneficiary society. Not that power absolute rests in any man, but that God and Christ through men of the Church or Kingdom has promised, and shown that He would manifest himself to them unto the forgiveness of their sins, the accepting them into fellowship with the Spirit of God, the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, and their ultimate salvation.

Reader, try them.

As a fit closing to this little tract, the following is presented.

The "Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," offers for your attention,

1. God is their King.
 2. Christ is their Prince of Life—Savior—Messiah—Redeemer.
 3. The King and Prince, though absent in person, are by the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, which is the Holy Ghost, present with them.
 4. The Gospel, the Law of the Kingdom, the Will of the King, is preached among them in the Doctrines and Teachings of Christ.
 5. The promise that the Comforter should testify of Jesus, and manifest Him to the believer, is fulfilled unto them.
 6. The Officers, called to represent the King, and the Prince, and to administer the Law of the Kingdom, are Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, Evangelists; and there are helps, governments, gifts of healings, and diversities of tongues.
 7. The Gospel is preached without price, the poor having it preached to them.
- Here is the Kingdom of God, where the seeker may rest from his searching, and bring forth the righteousness which is by faith.