

LESSON 14

GREAT BIBLE THEMES

In our study of the events recorded in Acts 2, we noticed that the kingdom of the Lord had its beginning as an institution in Jerusalem and that it was designed to extend to all nations. The book of Acts gives us the inspired history of the growth in Jerusalem, how a persecution arose that forced its members to leave their capital city. But wherever they went they took the message of salvation to those who had not heard it. You will read of the missionary efforts of an evangelist by the name of Philip who went to Samaria to preach. You will read of the conversion of many to the gospel of Christ. You will find in the latter part of the book the missionary efforts of Paul and his co-workers as they carried the gospel to the "uttermost parts of the earth". You will be impressed with the earnestness and zeal of these early Christians as they endured many hardships in order to share their blessings in Christ with those who did not know him.

You will recall that the Old Testament prophets frequently made reference to God's plans for a king who would rule over an everlasting kingdom. We also noticed that Jesus continually thought and taught in terms of this kingdom. In the remaining books of the New Testament we have many references to the fact that this kingdom was being preached. We do not, however, have the term "kingdom" used as frequently as it was used in the gospels. The reason for this will appear in the development of today's lesson. Here are the questions which give us an outline for our study.

1. We would expect those who preached the gospel in the early days of the church to make many references to God's kingdom. Do we find this to be true?
2. Does the New Testament sometimes use the term "kingdom" in a different sense than the one in which we have been using it?
3. Do we find other terms used in referring to God's kingdom? If so, what terms? Give three (3) of these terms and give briefly what relationship between God and his people is suggested by each.
4. Is the term "church" sometimes used to refer to all the redeemed or saved, and sometimes to refer to believers in some locality? If so, give examples of each.
5. In the Old Testament times, God told Moses to build a sanctuary as a dwelling place for God. How does this compare with the New Testament teaching regarding God's dwelling place today?

LET US LOOK TO THE BIBLE FOR OUR ANSWERS

Let us look at a number of references which show the prominence given by the preachers and writers of the New Testament to the kingdom of the Lord. In the eighth chapter of Acts we have the record of Phillip, the evangelist, and his successful work in Samaria. Notice a summary of his work as given in verse 12. "But when they _____ Phillip preaching the things concerning the _____, and the name of _____ were _____, both _____ and _____."

Notice that Phillip preached the things concerning the _____, and that the people who _____ were _____. Is this exactly what happened in the beginning on Pentecost? Was it God's plan that people should hear the gospel, believe the gospel and be baptized? The very closing verses of the book of Acts tell of Paul who had given many years to preaching, and of his imprisonment in Rome. See Acts 28:30-31. "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house and received all that came unto him, Preaching the _____, and teaching those things which concern the _____, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." Yes, he too continued to tell about the blessings of the Lord's kingdom as long as he lived.

Paul was always admonishing Christian people to live in a worthy manner as followers of Christ. Notice the admonition to the church at Thessalonica, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, "That ye would _____, who hath called you unto _____ and glory." The means by which these people had been called is set forth in 2 Thessalonians 2:14, "Whereunto he called you by _____, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus, these Christians had been called by the gospel unto God's kingdom. Let us notice one further reference in this connection. Colossians 1:13. Here Paul speaks of giving thanks to God. "Who hath delivered us from the _____ of _____ and hath _____ us into the kingdom of his _____."

The idea is sometimes advanced that God's kingdom is not to come before the end of the world. Do the references given above definitely make mention of who were in this kingdom at

the time these letters were written? Re-read these verses if necessary to be sure you answer this question in the light of the teaching of the Bible. Are they so clear on this point that we cannot be mistaken?

Would it be necessary to conclude that the term "kingdom" is never used to refer to the world to come? That this would be an erroneous conclusion is seen in the following verses. In Matthew 25:31-46, Christ is picturing the judgment scene when he shall sit on the throne of his glory with all nations before him. Now read verse 34, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, _____

_____."

Notice the reference to the kingdom in 2 Peter 1:10-11, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall _____: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into _____
_____."

Do these references definitely refer to an everlasting kingdom after this life is over? Is there anything inconsistent in using this term in two senses in the New Testament? The term "kingdom" is used to express a relationship that should exist between God and His people on the earth. It implied the following five items at least: a king or ruler, people who are subjects or citizens, laws and regulations to govern, the protection the king affords his citizens, and possibly awards for faithful service in the kingdom. Christ is our king who gives our laws. Obedient believers are the citizens. The New Testament contains our laws and regulations. Christ promises protection and

blessings in this life and an eternity with him for those who remain faithful to him.

The relationship that we may sustain to God is also given by a number of other terms. For instance we have already noticed the term "church". This term means a group of "called out people". In 2 Corinthians 6:16-18 we have this idea set forth. ". . . for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Whereof _____, _____, _____, and be ye _____, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." The followers of Christ have been called out from worldly things and are to separate themselves from them. Thus the term "church" in its root meaning is very properly used to express this fact. In our next lesson we plan to study several other terms that are used in the New Testament to apply to the citizens of God's kingdom.

This term "church" sometimes has reference to a local congregation of Christians, and sometimes it is used to designate all of God's children on the earth, with no reference to geographical location. In which of the following references does this term apply to all believers, and which to Christians meeting in some locality?

Christ said, Matthew 16:18, ". . . upon this _____ build _____."

Galatians 1:21-22, "Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was _____"

_____ unto the _____ of _____
which were in Christ."

Notice how Paul addresses his letter to the Christians at Corinth.
1 Corinthians 1:2. "Unto the _____
_____ which is at _____."

Colossians 1:18, "And he is the _____
_____, the _____." (This
reference also gives another term that is used instead of the term
"kingdom". Would it be proper to refer to the church as the body
of Christ?)

Was he referring to the Christians in only one place when he
wrote Ephesians 1:22-23? "And hath put all things under his
feet, and gave him to be the _____
_____, _____
_____, Which is _____,

_____."

Notice that in the first of these references Christ spoke of "my
church". In the second he referred to the churches in Judea
which were "in Christ". The last two refer to Christ as being
"head over all things to the church". Although the term
"kingdom" is not used, do these terms express the same
relationship that exists between a king and the citizens of his
kingdom?

The words "church" and "churches" may both have the same
general meaning according to their use in the Bible. There has
been much misunderstanding as to the word "churches" (plural)

as used in the New Testament. This word is never used to indicate different kinds of institutions, but is used with reference to the church in different locations, as the church in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, etc. Would it be correct to say that instead of being different kinds of institutions that they were different congregations meeting in different places, but that they were all under the divine authority of Christ?

In the Old Testament times, God asked Moses to build a house in which he might dwell. Exodus 25:1-9, tells what the people were to bring. **Exodus 25:1-9, And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate. And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it. (AKJV)** Notice verse eight (8) especially.

"And let them _____
_____; that _____
_____ among them." In the New Testament, however, God cannot be thought of as dwelling in some building made with hands, but he dwells in the hearts of his people who collectively constitute the church. See Acts 7:48. "Howbeit the _____
_____. " Look also to the first part of

2 Corinthians 6:16, which was quoted above, to see about the dwelling place of God. Remember that this was written to the church at Corinth. “. . . for ye (the church) are the

_____.” Does this suggest still another term that is used for the church or kingdom? Notice this term “temple of God” suggests some phases of the relationship that exists between God and his people since they constitute his dwelling place. Would it be correct to say that since God is pure and holy he would not dwell in a place of impurity? Does this place a responsibility upon each of God’s children to think only pure thoughts and plan only wholesome deeds?

For our final thought for today about the church, let us recall the last statement in Acts 2. We have noticed it in previous lessons. “And the _____ to the _____ daily such as should be _____.”

With this passage in mind can we answer the questions as to what individuals make up the church? Would it be correct to say that it is composed of all the saved of earth? This would be using the term in its general sense and not in the sense of a local congregation. It might be helpful to notice also that the Revised Standard Version uses the expression “added unto them” instead of the term “added to the church”, as we have quoted it from the King James Version. If those who were being saved were added by the Lord to those who were already Christians, would they be added to the church or “called-out” group who had come out of the world to follow Christ? We might also notice that the apostles preached the gospel, the people believed it and obeyed it and the Lord added these to the church for they should be saved.

TEST

1. In Acts 2:47 we found that those who should be saved were added to the church. Who added these people to the church? (a) Those who were being saved, (b) The officers of the church, (c) The voting members of the church? (d) The Lord? _____
2. After the ascension of Christ, the apostles preached: (a) "Thy kingdom come" when Christ returns, (b) nothing about the kingdom, (c) that Christians were in the kingdom, (d) that the kingdom was postponed. _____
3. The word "churches" (plural) found in the New Testament refers to: (a) different congregations of the same church, (b) different kinds of institutions, (c) groups of believers in Christ, but having different plans of salvation, (d) different faiths having different requirements for church membership.

4. Paul (did, did not) say the Colossian Christians had been translated into the kingdom of Christ. _____
5. God dwells mainly in temples made by men's hands. (True or False) _____
6. The kingdom is spoken of in three of the following ways in the New Testament: (a) everlasting kingdom, (b) a coming kingdom, (c) a present kingdom, (d) an earthly kingdom. Which one is NOT correct? _____

7. The word "church" is used to refer to either the local congregation or to the universal church. (True or False)

8. The term "church" means a group of called out people. (True or False) _____
9. Peter told us how to keep from falling. He said it was by: (a) just believing in Christ, (b) feeling you are secure, (c) doing certain things, (d) letting your conscience guide you.

10. The church is known by several expressions. Which one of the following is not mentioned in the New Testament? (a) the body of Christ, (b) the church of Christ, (c) the church of the firstborn, (d) the kingdom of Christ, (e) church of your choice. _____

Score: 10 points for each correct answer _____

Correct answers to the test in lesson 13:

1. (b)
2. (f)
3. (c)
4. (d)
5. (d)
6. (b)
7. (c)
8. (a)
9. (b)
10. (false)