

THE CHURCH/KINGDOM OF CHRIST ESTABLISHED ON PENTECOST, CHRIST IS REIGNING

The greatest blessing that one can have in this life is to be a faithful member of the church of Christ, a citizen of the kingdom of God's dear Son. While many down play the church as an afterthought of God, and confuse it with modern day denominations, heaven exalts it as being God's "eternal purpose" and purchased by the precious blood of Christ (Eph. 3:10-11, Acts 20:28). The Premillennialists believe that the kingdom of God is materialistic in nature and one day will be established in the city of Jerusalem. It is thought by such that Christ came to establish His kingdom on earth, but the Jews rejected Him. Consequently (it is affirmed), Christ postponed the kingdom and set up the church instead. Mr. W. E. Blackstone stated it as follows:

"The kingdom did come 'nigh' when Christ came, and had they received Him, it would have been manifested, but now it is in abeyance, or waiting until He comes again."ⁱ

The Church and the Kingdom- The Same Institution

The called out people who belong to God are designated under various titles and/or metaphors. They are the bride of Christ (Rev. 22:17), the army of God (Eph. 6:10-17), the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), and the kingdom (Col. 1:13). These are not different groups of people, but rather different designations to the same group. It is called the "church" because it has been "called out" of the world into fellowship with God. It is "the kingdom" signifying the type of government by which it operates. Christ is the head of the body, the church, and He is the king of the kingdom. God's people, the church, are termed as "an holy nation" (I Pet. 2:9), and as such must have a form of government. It is not a Republic, which has a President. Neither is it an Empire, which has an Emperor. It is, however, a kingdom which has Jesus as its King. It is important to understand that Christ is King **now**. This being true, His kingdom exist **now**. To state it another way: Christ is King in the church age, and that being true, the kingdom exist in the church age.

In order to help establish that the church and the kingdom are the same, attention is called to various prophecies of the kingdom/church. The first such prophecy is II Samuel 7:12-14. Nathan informs David:

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.

God would establish a kingdom using the seed of David (verse 12). It would be after David's death (verse 12). This person, (David's seed), would also "build an house for my name," and God would "establish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (verse 13). The word of God informs us that the "house of God" is "the church of the living God" (I Tim. 3:15).

This person who would build an house for God's name, would have a kingdom (verses 12 and 13). Scripture affirms that the person in whom all these things were accomplished is God's Son, Jesus Christ. The Hebrew writer quotes II Samuel and applies it to the Christ (compare II Samuel 7:14 and Heb. 1:5). These passages prove that the church and the kingdom are the one and the same, and that such was established by Jesus Christ.

Isaiah, likewise, prophesied that God's house (the church) would be established. Some 750 years before Christ came to the earth, he wrote:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-4).

Notice that Isaiah says that "the mountain of the Lord's house" would be established in "the last days." Again, the Lord's house is the church (I Tim. 3:15). Yet the "Lord's house" is also the kingdom (II Sam. 7:13). Therefore, Isaiah foretells of the establishment of the church/kingdom. (More will be said relative to "the last days" in the next section.)

The prophet Daniel, whose life spanned the whole seventy years Babylonian captivity, received a vision of Christ's ascension and His receiving the kingdom. He wrote:

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. 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 (Dan. 7:13-14).

Daniel foresees the ascension of Christ and Him (the Christ) being brought before the ancient of days (the Father). When He was brought before the Ancient of days there was given to Him "a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve Him." His dominion is described as "an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." This is scriptural proof that Christ became king when He ascended into heaven! Yet, this is the **same time** He became the head of the church. Paul wrote:

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:20-23).

Christ became king of His kingdom when he ascended back into heaven. Yet, He became the head of the church at the same time. He did not become authority over two separate institutions. He is the head of the church and king of the kingdom.

Not only do the prophets show the church and the kingdom as the same institution, but so do the New Testament writers. Paul says that the Lord's supper is in the church (I Cor. 11:17-22). However, the Lord's supper is in the kingdom (Luke 22:18). Thus, the church and the kingdom are the one and the same.

Jesus says that the word of God is "seed." "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). God has decreed that every seed produces "after his kind" (Gen. 1:11). Observe, however, that **the seed, the word of the kingdom**, was planted in the first century, it produced the **church**. Again this establishes the fact that the kingdom and the church are the same. **The word of the kingdom produced the church!**

Our Lord promised Peter that He (Christ) would build His church and that He would give unto Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:18). Peter used these keys of the kingdom to open the doors of the church (Acts 2:36-47). Here again is evidence that the church and the kingdom are the same.

When Jesus returns, He is going to carry the church into heaven (Eph. 5:23,25-27). It is also stated that He is going to deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father (I Cor. 15:24). He is not delivering two separate organizations. The church and the kingdom are the same and will be carried up into heaven when Jesus returns (II Pet. 1:11).

The church and the kingdom are seen to be the same in that one cannot enter into the church without entering into the kingdom. When one is scripturally baptized into Christ, he is baptized into the body (church). Paul wrote, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. . ." (I Cor. 12:13). This is a person whom has been "born again." Yet, Jesus says when one is born again, he enters into the kingdom, "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" (John 3:3). When a person is born of the water and the Spirit, he enters the kingdom of God (John 3:5). The water in this passage refers to baptism. So when one is scripturally baptized, he enters the kingdom (John 3:5), or the church (I Cor. 12:13). The church and the kingdom are the same institution.

The following comparisons also aids in establishing that the church and the kingdom are the same.

Church

Christ is its head - Eph. 1:22
Baptized into the church - I Cor. 12:13
Everlasting - Eph. 3:4
Apostles - Eph. 2:20
Washing of Regeneration - Titus 3:5
Lord's table - I Cor. 11:26

Kingdom

Christ is its king - I Tim. 6:15
Baptized into the kingdom - John 3:5
Everlasting - Dan. 2:44
Apostles - Mt. 19:28
Time of Regeneration - Mt. 19:28
Lord's table - Lk. 22:29-30

Word of faith - Rom. 10:8
The Israel of God - Gal. 6:16

Word of kingdom - Mt. 13:19
Israel - Mt. 19:28

The Church/Kingdom Established on Pentecost

It is obvious to all who have read their New Testament, that Jesus Christ has a church. He is its builder and its head. It is self evident that the church of Christ is now in existence. This being true, it is also self evident that there had to be a point in time when it was established.ⁱⁱ Various theories have been advanced by men as to when it was established. One theory has been termed as “the eternal covenant,” which affirms that God and Christ entered into a covenant before the foundation of the world. From here, the advocates of this theory state, that God unconditionally elected certain ones to be saved while all others will be lost.

Another theory has the church established during the days of Abraham. From this theory, it has been argued that there were infants in the church at that time and consequently infants now are members of the church due to the Abrahamic covenant.

Still others affirmed that the church was established during the days of John the Baptist, hence the name “Baptist church.” Many Baptist churches no longer hold to such a view as to the origin of their name. Rather, they now affirm that their name (Baptist Church), is due to the fact that they immerse people, rather than sprinkle or pour. Of course, there is no authorization in the scripture for the name “Baptist Church.” Finally, some say that Christ established His church during His personal ministry on earth.

All of the above theories are false. Although the church was in the eternal purpose of God, that is not **when** the church was established. Abraham was never a member of the New Testament church. John the Baptist, like Abraham and others, died before the church of Christ was established. The account of John’s death is recorded in Matthew 14. Two chapters later one reads that Christ promised to build His church yet in the future (Matt. 16). Therefore, John the Baptist could not have built the church, nor could it have been established during His lifetime. Jesus did not establish His church (kingdom) during His personal ministry (which we shall prove).

Relative to the time of the establishment of the church, Isaiah prophesied that “the mountain of the Lord’s house” would be established in “**the last days**” (Isa. 2:2-3). The phrase, “the last days,” has reference to the last dispensation of time. There have been the Patriarchal age, the Mosaic age, and now “the Christian age.” There will not be another “age” on earth after “The Christian Age.” It will terminate at the second coming of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:27-28). Hence, the Christian age is “the last days.” Peter identifies the day of Pentecost as in “the last days.” In explaining the events of that day, he stated:

But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams (Acts 2:16-17).

Peter said “this is that.” The “that” has reference to what Joel said would happen in “the last days.” Thus, Peter (an inspired apostle) identifies the day of Pentecost as “the last days.” But, remember Isaiah said the Lord’s house (the church, I Tim. 3:15), would be established in “the last days” (Isa. 2:2-3).

Not only does Isaiah identify the time of the church’s establishment, but he also identifies the place of its establishment. He wrote, “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3). This is exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost! Christ, of course, knew that this was to be accomplished, as foretold by Isaiah, and He commanded the apostles to wait in the city of Jerusalem until they were endowed with power from on high (Luke 24:49). They did wait in Jerusalem, as commanded, and the Lord and the word of the Lord went forth from Zion, as prophesied.

Daniel, likewise, foretold the time of the establishment of the kingdom. King Nebuchadnezzar received a vision which chronicled the events leading up to God establishing His kingdom (Read Daniel 2). God had Daniel to interpret this vision, which was seen by Nebuchadnezzar. In this vision four world empires were discussed. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of the Babylonian kingdom, but after him there would be three other kingdoms. These kingdoms were the Medo-Persian kingdom, the Grecian kingdom and the Roman kingdom. It would be during the days of the Roman kingdom that God’s kingdom would be established. Daniel wrote:

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 (Dan. 2:44).

The day of Pentecost was during the days of the Roman kingdom. Notice that Daniel wrote that 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.**” This same kingdom is discussed by the Hebrews’ writer. “Wherefore we receive a kingdom which **cannot be moved**, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” (Heb. 12:28) Note that the Hebrews’ writer said that Christians have received a kingdom “which cannot be moved.” Daniel said that the kingdom would stand for ever. This is the kingdom (church) that was established on the day of Pentecost, following the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As time drew nigh for the establishment of the kingdom on Pentecost, God sent various ones preaching, that the kingdom was “at hand.” Among this list, were John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-2), Jesus Christ (Mt. 4:17), the twelve apostles (Mt. 10:7), and the seventy disciples sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:9). The time of its establishment was nearby. Jesus, however, taught that the kingdom was still future during His personal ministry. He said, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). Earlier, He had taught His disciples to pray “Thy kingdom come...” (Mat. 6:10). Jesus said that some of His disciples would still be alive when the kingdom of God came “with power” (Mark 9:1). Here is another identifying mark to the establishment of the kingdom. Jesus said that the kingdom of God would come “with

power.” If one can determine when the power came, he will know when the kingdom came. Jesus told the apostles that they would “receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8). The kingdom was to come with power. The power was to come after the Holy Ghost came upon the apostles. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, the power came, and the kingdom came! But when did the Holy Spirit come upon the apostles and clothe them with power?

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

This is proof positive that the kingdom (church) was established upon the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2.

Before Pentecost, the church/kingdom is spoken of as yet in the future. After Pentecost, the church/kingdom is spoken of as already established. Paul, writing to the “saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse,” stated that God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear son” (Col. 1:13).

The faithful Jewish Christians in the first century knew they were in the kingdom. The Hebrews’s writer stated; “wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28).

The apostle John affirmed that he was “in the kingdom” (Rev. 1:9). He obviously could not have been “in the kingdom” if it had not been established. Before Pentecost, the church/kingdom was in the future. After Pentecost, the church/kingdom was a reality (in existence).

Peter, in Acts 1:15, refers to Pentecost as “the beginning.” In explaining why He went among the Gentiles and baptized them, he stated, “And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.” “The beginning” in this passage has reference to when the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Therefore, the day of Pentecost (by inspiration), is termed as “the beginning.” The day of Pentecost was when the church/kingdom of Christ was established.

If Before Pentecost

Not only does the Bible clearly teach that the church/kingdom was established on Pentecost, but there are insurmountable difficulties (or impossibilities), for it to have been established any earlier.

If the church was established before Pentecost, it would have been a church with no head. Jesus Christ ascended up into heaven some forty days after His resurrection, and **was then** made the head of the church.

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:20-23).

If the church was established prior to Pentecost, it would be a church that had not been purchased. The Bible informs us that the church was purchased with the blood of Christ. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

If the church had been established before Pentecost, it would have been a church with no foundation. Isaiah wrote, "therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa. 28:16). This stone, which would serve as the foundation, would be a "tried stone." Jesus would have to be put to death and resurrected before becoming this stone. He is the foundation of the church. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11).

If the church was established prior to Pentecost, then there would exist the New Testament church without the New Testament (a contradiction!). In order for the New Testament (Christ's Testament) to be in force, there first had to be the death of the Testator (Christ). "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Heb. 9:16-17).

All of these impossibilities prove that the church/kingdom could not have been established prior to the day of Pentecost. Yet, the church could not have been established after Pentecost (as earlier seen, and as Acts 2:47 teaches that people were being added to the church). Therefore, the church or kingdom of Christ was established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

Christ Reigning

Often times in the scriptures, Jesus is referred to as "king." In fact, He is called "king of kings and Lord of Lords" (I Tim. 6:15). In spite of this, some teach (either by explicit statement or by implication), that He does not yet possess all His regal power. Dispensational premillennialist teach that when Christ comes again, He will at time begin to occupy the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem. Sometimes it has been affirmed that Christ is on God's throne, but not yet on the promised David's throne. The truth of the matter is, David's throne is God's throne. Solomon sat upon David's throne (I Kings 2:12),

yet, he sat upon the Lord's throne (I Chr. 29:23). They are the one and same throne. But is Jesus Christ reigning today with "all authority?" Is He occupying the promised throne of David? Is He king **now**? The scriptures answer in the affirmative!

Although David was not allowed to build the temple, God promised, "And when thy days be fulfilled and thou shalt sleep with the fathers, I will set up the seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom, . . . and thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever (II Sam. 7:12, 16). Christ is the one God has in mind in this passage (Heb. 1:5). Isaiah prophesied that Christ would be "upon the throne of David . . ." (Isa. 9:6). Mary was promised that the baby she was to conceive would be great and be called the Son of the Highest, "and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

These are but a few of the passages foretelling the reign of Christ on the throne of David. Have these passages been fulfilled? Is Christ reigning? Again, the scriptural answer is "yes!"

Peter, on Pentecost, affirmed that Christ has received the promise pertaining to David's throne. He declared:

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. 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 2:29-32).

Note carefully that Jesus was raised up to sit on the promised throne of David. Peter continues to prove the resurrection of Christ, which also proves the fulfillment of the passages pertaining to the Davidic throne. He informed his hearers, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Jesus Christ is Lord (Ruler) and He is Christ (the promised messiah)!

Zechariah had foretold that Christ would reign upon the throne of David. An interesting thing, however, is that he states that the same time Jesus was on the throne, He will also be a priest, "He shall be a priest upon his throne" (Zech. 6:13). Jesus Christ could not serve as a priest on earth due to him being from the tribe of Judah, and not the tribe of Levi (Heb. 7:14, 8:4). Christ is a priest while on His throne. But He is not a priest on earth. Consequently, He is not a king on earth. Therefore, premillennialism, which states He will be a king on earth, is false! Jesus Christ is in Heaven and is now reigning as king and our High priest.

When Did His Reign Begin?

Daniel foresaw Christ ascending into heaven, being brought before the Ancient of days, and a kingdom being given unto Him (Dan. 7:13-14).

The Hebrews' writer confirmed this when He wrote, "When He had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high (Heb. 1:3). Jesus Christ ascended up into heaven and was made king. He today reigns as "king of kings and Lord of lords" (I Tim. 6:15).

When Will His Reign End?

Rather than Jesus beginning His reign when He returns, the scriptures affirm, He will deliver up the kingdom to God.

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. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed in death (I Cor. 15:24-26).

Christ is reigning now and when He returns, destroying death, etc., He will deliver His kingdom unto God, the Father. "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (I Cor. 15:28).

Conclusion

The church and the kingdom are the same. It was established on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ. The saved are in that kingdom over which Christ is now reigning as King. May we submit ourselves to Him, so we can one day hear him with reference to the eternal phase of the kingdom, say, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

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ENDNOTES

1. Blackstone, W. E., Jesus Is Coming, Old Tappan, New Jersey, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1932, p. 88.
2. Brents, T. W., The Gospel of Salvation, Nashville, TN, Gospel Advocate Company, 1973, pp. 148-149.