

The Kingdom of God on Earth - 3

It is a matter of life or death, says the apostle Paul, to believe the same gospel which he preached. - If that gospel does not include the doctrine which concerns the Kingdom of God, then it is a gospel which has no power to save. We must know what the Kingdom of God is.

Is the Kingdom of God a spiritual condition in the hearts of people? In support of this idea the words of Jesus are quoted - "The kingdom of God is within you" - Luke 17:21 NKJ. The reader will not want to overlook the fact that these words were addressed to the Pharisees, of whom Jesus said, "You also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" - Matthew 23:28.

This is not the state of mind to be found where the kingdom of God is believed to exist. These were not men in whose hearts God reigned. Other modern English Bible versions more accurately render this passage, "the kingdom of God is in your midst" - NAS; "the kingdom of God is among you" - NRS and "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" - ESV.

The Pharisees had posed an insincere inquiry to Jesus - When was the kingdom of God to come? What they refused to accept was that Jesus was the promised core of that Kingdom, and that future King was now in their midst. As the angel had announced to Mary, "the Lord God will give him the throne of His father David" - Luke 1:32.

But what about Romans 14:17 "the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." This fact does nothing to dispose of a literal, political Kingdom. The kingdom of God when established, will, in contrast with the current corruption, conflict and misery, be filled with righteousness and peace and joy.

The kingdom of God will be a real and glorious manifestation of God's power on earth, acting through the personal intervention of His Son from heaven.

Is the true Christian church, whatever form that may be, the Kingdom of God? This idea originates from the times succeeding the overthrow of Paganism, in the beginning of the fourth century. This was when Constantine was credited with rescuing the Christians from their pagan persecutors. He made Christianity recognized by the state, which also offered it prosperity and power.

In the joy of the great change, the bishops of that time proclaimed that the Kingdom of God had come in the establishment of the Church. But for the Divine concept of the Church we must turn to the New Testament. Here, in summary, we find the Church to be composed of people who, while they are called "heirs of the Kingdom" James 2:5, and urged to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" - Philippians 2:12 - are not the Kingdom itself. Future articles, God willing, will look at the particular evidence of Scripture.

Can all nature, from the vastness of outer space to the smallest organism in the seas be properly regarded as the Kingdom of God? This view, which regards the universe as "the kingdom of God," has more an element of truth in it than the other ideas. True, nature was designed and created by God, but it does not fit the Scriptural definition of "the kingdom of God."

And so in searching for the true meaning of this expression, "The Kingdom of God," we cannot do better than look at it where it was coined, since it is a Bible term.