

The Kingdom of God with Jesus as King

Lesson

The word “church” is the **identifying term** of choice to articulate the meaning of what is more than one Christian. Church is the word used “to house” what is called Christianity. What I mean is if someone asked; Are you a Christian? We may hear the response; Yes, I go to church. Where do you go? Well, I go to the church on the corner of Main and State Street. Now you may ask: Where did I get these ideas? I got them from the dictionary. Well, where did they get their meanings? The people who make dictionaries get the word meanings from the way people have used or are using the terms. Of course, the next question must be; Where do people get the meaning for the words we use?

A four year old girl asked, “What is it mother?” “It’s a strawberry.” So the little girl will immediately began to commit to her storeroom of awareness, its texture, size, color, smell and taste - if mother will allow. “What is it” is an ontological type of question. Ontology is concerned about the kind of things that exist - the nature and relations of being. A little boy is walking beside his father down Main Street and as they approach State Street, he inquires; “What is it, Dad?” “It’s a church.” Next question, “Can we look inside?” “Maybe, next Sunday.” The father half promises.

The next Sunday as the father is driving into the parking lot, the boy proudly explains to his sister. “That’s a church.” “Oh, how do you know?” She inquires. “Daddy told me.” “Well then if you are so smart,” she retorts. “What is a church?” Her brother admits, “I don’t know, we’ll see when we get inside.”

After returning home and while the family is finishing their lunch, Mother sets out a new desert. The boy excitedly asked his Mother; “What is it?” Just as excitedly, the four-year girl proudly explains, “It’s strawberries.” And this is the story of how the little boy and little girl became aware of “what is a strawberry and what is a church.” Since Mom and Dad know everything, their children’s newly acquired knowledge is sacredly stowed away.

And so we ask the question, “How do people know what it is?” This question belongs in the field of epistemology. According to Webster’s Dictionary, epistemology is a study, or theory, of the nature and grounds of knowledge, especially with reference to its limits and validity.

How then do people become aware of what is a church? Because everything we know or can know about the church and Christianity is written down in the Bible, we must enter the field of hermeneutics. This is a study of the principles of interpretation. This is why our lesson entitled “How to Read a Narrative?” is a part of this series of study in Acts. The reason we have so many different churches in the world today is because some Bible teachers and preachers did not do their “home work.” They do not take the time and effort to apply the principles of biblical interpretation. Christian who are interested in being in the kingdom of Christ when He turns it back to God will want to do transformed learning (I Cor. 15:24; Rom. 12:2). We can get a new mind by listening to God, about “what is a church?”

Later in this series we will do a detailed study of the “identifying terms of choice” in the Bible for what is a “church.” Please see Part II, Lesson Nine and Part IV, Lesson Three. First we must understand the term kingdom of God, or kingdom of heaven, as Matthew used the term. It will not take much inquiry to understand these terms are synonymously used by Matthew and Luke. Please compare Matt. 4:17; 5:5 with Luke 4:43; 6:20.

The reason we need to do a study of the kingdom of God before we attempt a study of the word “church” is because of the meaning of the word. The Greek word translated church in English is “*ekklesia*.” It is a combination of *ek*, “out of” and *klesis*, a calling. Almost every Bible reader knows this definition of the word church; however; we need to think what this word church suggests. Basically, it means an assembly. It is used in this context in Acts 19:39.

Ekklesia is usually translated church – the *ekklesia* of Jesus Christ. He builds His church with people who are “in Adam” in the world realm (John 18:36). To discuss the word church there must be two entities. One will be where the people are when they get the call and the other will be where they reside after they accept the call. The Apostle Paul established these two entities when he stated his own personal calling to King Agrippa. Jesus told Paul;

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.
Acts 26:18

In order to carry out this commission he went to places like Ephesus.

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them be-

came obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way.
Acts 19:8,9

The people who developed obedient faith in the message of the kingdom of God became the church of Christ in Ephesus and the church of God in Corinth (Acts 20:17; I Cor. 1:2). They, like the Christians at Colosse, were transferred into the kingdom of God from the dominion of darkness (Col. 1:12, 13). The word "church" can only be understood in context with these two kingdoms. One is God and Christ's kingdom (Eph. 5:5). The other is Satan's kingdom where most of God's children who are living on earth reside at this time (Eph. 2:1-3). God wants them all back in His kingdom where they belong (Luke 18:15-17; I Tim. 2:3, 4).

To help us gain a workable view of God's kingdom, the following scriptures are for our consideration. When these scriptures are accepted as the word of God, we should have no trouble understanding the word church. We will want to be in the kingdom of God. Some people will argue one church is as good as another, but no one will argue Satan's kingdom is as good as the one Jesus is reigning over as king (Acts 2:26). We cannot understand the Lord's church without relating it to the kingdom of God and Christ.

I. Preach the Kingdom.

Luke 4:43. And he said unto them, 'I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.'

Luke 8:1. And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him ...,

Luke 9:2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.

Luke 9:11. And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spoke unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

Luke 9:60. Jesus said unto him, 'Let the dead bury their dead: but you go and preach the kingdom of God.'

Luke 16:16. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it.

II. The Kingdom comes near to those who listen to the gospel of the kingdom.

Luke 9:27. But I tell you a truth, there be some standing here, who shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

Luke 10:9. And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, 'The kingdom of God is come near unto you.'

Luke 10:11. Even the very dust of your city, which cleaves on us, we do wipe off against you: nevertheless be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near unto you.

Luke 11:20. But if I with the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

Luke 19:11. And as they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

Luke 21:31. So likewise you, when you see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is near at hand.

Luke 22:16. For I say unto you, 'I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'

Luke 22:18. For I say unto you, 'I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.' See Acts chapters 1 and 2.

III. People who could not receive the Kingdom of God.

Luke 8:10. And he said, 'Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.' The people who could not receive the parables of Jesus, could not receive the kingdom.

Luke 9:62. And Jesus said unto him, 'No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' These are the people who lose their faith in the goal of being a child in God's kingdom eternally.

Luke 13:28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. These are the multitude of Jewish leaders who did not lead Israel to produce fruit for God. See Matt. 21:33-46.

Luke 14:15. And when one of them that sat at table with him heard these things, he said unto him, 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.' The people who are too busy with other things in this life will not be bidden to the feast. See 14:16-24 and Luke 9:60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but you go and preach the kingdom of God.

Luke 17:21. Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the king-

dom of God is in the midst of you. These are the people who cannot perceive of the "inside/out" concept of the kingdom of God with Jesus Christ as king.

Luke 18:17. Verily I say unto you, 'whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.' This refers to those people who cannot humble themselves to be learners of life in the kingdom.

Luke 18:24-25. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, 'how hard it is for those that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'

IV. The people who did, or could, accept the Kingdom of God.

Luke 6:20. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, 'Blessed be you who are poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. The poor in spirit and generally, only, the poor in material things seek the kingdom.'

Luke 13:29. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. Gentiles now have the opportunity to enter God's kingdom.

Luke 16:16. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it. These are the people who will allow themselves to be pressed into the life of a Christian.

Luke 17:20. And when he was demanded by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, 'the kingdom of God comes not with outward observation:'

Luke 17:21. Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. The people who will accept the new covenant from their spiritual birth to their physical death will have the kingdom within..

Luke 18:16. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, 'Allow little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.' Children (little people) are Christian's (big people) role model as citizens in God's kingdom..

V. The nature and blessing in the kingdom with Jesus as King.

Luke 7:28. For I say unto you, 'Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but **he that is least** in the kingdom of God is **greater** than he.'

Luke 8:1. And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the **glad tidings** of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,

Luke 8:10. And he said, Unto you it is given to **know the mysteries of the kingdom** of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

Luke 9:62. And Jesus said unto him, 'No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' Christians, who are faithful servants until the time of our own death, or until Jesus comes: In our service, are being developed in character and personality for the kingdom of God. Even then, our growth in service is by the grace of the blessings "in Christ."

Luke 12:31. But rather seek you the kingdom of God; and **all these things** (basic needs) shall be added unto you.

Luke 13:18. Then said he, 'Unto what is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? Christians become salt and light.'

Luke 13:20. And again he said, 'to what shall I liken the kingdom of God?' Christians are permeated by the society of the kingdom of God.

Luke 14:15. And when one of them that sat at table with him heard these things, he said 'unto him, **Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.**'

Luke 17:21. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.**

Luke 18:29, 30. And he said unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, There is no man that has left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, **who shall not receive manifold more in this present life, and in the world to come life everlasting.**'

Luke 22:16. For I say unto you, 'I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'

Luke 22:18. For I say unto you, 'I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.' Christians commune with Jesus in His suffering on the cross each First Day of the week.

Questions for Discussion

1. Much of our pre-school learning, which is still imbedded deep in our memory, is accomplished by passive learning. We cannot read so we watch and listen. How did we first learn what is a church?
2. If the **identifying terms** our parents understood were attained by passive learning only and we never relearned "what is a church," we would have Grandpa and Grandma's view of church. If they had a non- kingdom understanding of church, what would we need to do to get terminology and vision right?
3. Our field of ontological learning preceded our epistemological learning. Bible learning belongs in the field of hermeneutical learning. We learn by reading literature. Since Bible literature is the word of God; "How do Christian do transformed learning?"
4. What is the root meaning of the word church?
5. Other than the kingdom of God, what is the other kingdom we need to know about to properly use the word church in the way it is used in the Bible?
6. What did Jesus preach in order to build His church?
7. How did the kingdom of God come near people while Jesus was in Israel?
8. Jesus made several observations about people who would not receive the kingdom He preached. Please list three reasons for class discussion.
9. Jesus also spoke lovingly about those of us who could enter His kingdom and be turned back to God's kingdom eternally. Please list three kinds of people who will be found in the kingdom.
10. Why do children not need to be converted by the preaching of the kingdom?
11. There are many mysteries of the kingdom revealed to people today that were not revealed before Jesus taught us. What is one literary tool He used to take the mystery out of the kingdom of God?
12. In what sense can the kingdom of God permeate a Christian?
13. Since the kingdom of God is spiritual, to "eat bread in the kingdom" cannot mean bread made from grain. Please give your understanding of this term.
14. How can Christians be assured our basic material needs will be satisfied?