

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER (12)

The Church and Kingdom

Today we continue our 2026 theme, “What God has (and has not) joined together”. We are in the midst of addressing some fundamental doctrines: Christ and His church, Christ and the teachings of the apostles, the Gospel of Christ and doctrine of Christ. Continuing to examine things “joined together” that are misunderstood by many in the religious world today, this lesson will note how the church and kingdom of God are related to each other

The premise behind this lesson is a misunderstanding that some have making a distinction between the church & kingdom. Mainly, by those who advocate the doctrine of premillennialism teach that the kingdom is yet future. We are living in the “church age”, which some advocate was set up temporarily until Christ returns to reign on the literal throne of David in Jerusalem for 1000 years, a time of peace and purity on earth. As we shall see in this lesson, those who are part of the church are also part of the kingdom of God that is now in existence.

I. Defining the terms

- a. What does the term “church” mean?
 - i. The Greek term, ἐκκλησία, ekklēsia means “to call out of”. It was a common word in Greek culture that referred to an assembly or gathering.
 - ii. The term is used secularly in Acts 19:32-41 where a riot was forming in Ephesus and the magistrates dealt with it.
 - iii. When the NT uses the term, ‘church’, (~105x) they are making a distinction between its secular and spiritual usage.
 - iv. The term church refers to “the called out body of the saved.” Those “called out” of the world, committed to separation from its sinful ways, and committed to serve Jesus according to His will.
 - v. The term is used in 2 difference senses – 1) the body of the saved at all times (universal), and 2) a group of the saved in a given location(s) who join together to do God’s word designed to be done collectively – e.g., worshipping God, supporting the preaching of the gospel, spiritually strengthening the saints, etc.
 - vi. Bible students have little problem defining the church as those who are saved, and generally they understand the distinctions of the term (though there is clearly misunderstandings). If you are saved, you are added to the church – Acts 2:47, Ephesians 1:22-23 – you are part of the body of Christ.
 - vii. When we speak of the church and kingdom joined together in this lesson, our primary focus is on its usage in the universal sense.
- b. What does the term “kingdom” mean?
 - i. The Greek term for kingdom is βασιλεία, basileia, and describes a domain ruled by a king.
 - ii. There are many qualities associated with a kingdom – a ruler (king), subjects (citizens), a territory (realm), and a law governing the kingdom.
 - iii. The Bible speaks of the kingdom of God/Christ (among other uses of kingdom not relevant to our present study).
 - iv. Like the term “church”, if you are saved, you are part of this kingdom – Colossians 1:13, James 2:5, 2 Peter 1:11, etc.
 - v. The fact that BOTH terms refer to the same people is the foundation of this study.

- c. Why two different terms?
 - i. While describing the saved, they simply describe different identities of the same group.
 - ii. Those in the “church” are as defined, called out of the ways of the world and into fellowship with Christ and others of “like precious faith.”
 - iii. The term “kingdom” serves as a reminder that Christ is our king and we are subject to Him and his laws.
 - iv. Note that the body of the saved are described by several different terms – body – Ephesians 1:22-23, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, etc.), temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17), household (1 Timothy 3:14-15), etc. Each of these terms is descriptive of different functions/purposes of the same individuals.
 - v. Together, we get a more complete picture of our relationship with Christ, God and one another.

II. How are church and kingdom related?

- a. Both began on the same day – Acts 2 – Pentecost
 - i. NOTE: One point that must be clarified is to understand that the kingdom is spiritual. Jesus NEVER intended to establish a physical kingdom. This factors into how the church and kingdom are joined together.
 - 1. John 18:36 – Jesus told Pilate that “My kingdom is not of this world.”
 - 2. Luke 17:21 – the kingdom of God is within you.
 - 3. While on earth, the disciples of Jesus did not grasp this and were continually seeking a physical kingdom, but Jesus was clear that was NEVER His intent. As you examine what He taught about His kingdom, He had no intention of reigning on the throne of David IN Jerusalem. E.g., Matthew 5:3, 13:11, 24,
 - 4. Romans 14:17 – the kingdom is not eating and drinking.
 - ii. The kingdom was prophesied –
 - 1. Daniel 2:44 – Daniel interprets the dream of Nebuchadnezzar noting that in the days of a 4th empire (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Macedonia, then Rome) God would set up His kingdom that would never be destroyed.
 - 2. Daniel 7:13-14 – a clear messianic prophecy notes that He would receive a kingdom which would never be destroyed.
 - 3. Psalm 45:6 prophecies of an everlasting kingdom. Hebrews 1:8-9 applies this to Jesus and does so implying the kingdom was THEN in existence.
 - 4. Luke 1:31-33 – as Gabriel appears to Mary to announce she will bring Christ Jesus into this world he notes what Jesus will do – He will be given the throne of David and will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.
 - 5. Matthew 3:2, 4:17 – John & Jesus preached, “Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
 - 6. Mark 9:1 – Jesus noted there were some standing there who would see the kingdom present with power
 - iii. The church prophesied – while not directly addressed in the Old Testament, we find its timing announced.
 - 1. Matthew 16:18-19 – Jesus tells Peter, “upon this rock I will build (future) My church. NOTE: He also mentions giving them the “Keys to the kingdom of heaven” (future)
 - 2. Ephesians 3:10-11 notes that the church was in God’s eternal purpose.

- iv. BOTH can trace their origin back to Acts 2, the day the church/kingdom began.
 - 1. Concerning the kingdom –
 - a. Acts 1:6-8 – still not “restored” but Jesus tells them to go to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:1-4 the Holy Spirit baptizes the apostles.
 - b. The sermon Peter and the others preached declared fulfillment of prophecy – Joel 2:28-32 is quoted in Acts 2:16-21. A study of Joel is anticipating the coming kingdom. So is Isaiah 2:2-4 which prophecies of a new law coming out of Zion (Jerusalem). Peter concludes the sermon on Pentecost noting that God has seated Jesus on the throne of David where He is now “Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:32-36). Some got it on that day (about 3000 were baptized).
 - c. Following this, the kingdom is spoken of as in existence – Colossians 1:13, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, Hebrews 12:28 – we are receiving (present tense) a kingdom. Revelation 1:9 as John writes he notes, *I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,...* He was describing something he was a part of.
 - 2. Concerning the church
 - a. The book of Acts records the infancy and spread of the church. Congregations were established as the gospel was preached.
 - b. Acts 2:47 – NKJV, KJV – *the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.* (NOTE: Other versions say, “to their number” – LSB, ESV, NASB, etc.), but contextually the church is clearly understood.
 - c. Acts 5:11 – speaks of fear coming upon the church; Acts 8:1 Paul is persecuting the church, Acts 14:22-23 mentions both the kingdom and church.
 - d. Letters were written to churches – e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, etc.
 - e. Hebrews 12:22-23 – the writer mentions how they had come to *“the general assembly and church of the firstborn who ARE registered in heaven.”* Note THEN vs. 28 which mentions we are receiving a kingdom.
- b. There are other qualities that join them together
 - i. Both were purchased with the blood of Jesus –
 - 1. Colossians 1:13-14 – in the kingdom we have redemption through His blood;
 - 2. Acts 20:28 – the church was purchased with His blood
 - ii. Christ is the head –
 - 1. Acts 2:30, 36 – Peter’s declaration that He is Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 speaks of Christ now reigning until the end. Again Hebrews 1:8-9 – His throne is established.
 - 2. Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:18 – Christ is the head of the church.
 - iii. How one enters: Baptism –
 - 1. John 3:5, Acts 8:12 – the kingdom
 - 2. 1 Corinthians 12:13 – we are baptized into one body (His church – Ephesians 1:22-23).
 - 3. Both are related to one’s salvation.
- iv. We are subjects to Jesus
 - 1. Ephesians 2:19 – citizens of the kingdom, Colossians 1:13, Philippians 3:20

2. Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:27 – we are part of the body of Christ.
 3. To be a citizen of the kingdom of God is to be a member of the church of Christ.
- v. Concerning the Lord's supper
1. The kingdom - Luke 22:18, 29-30 – Jesus instituted the Lord's supper and said He would eat with them when the kingdom was established. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 – as we partake of the Lord's supper, we are in fellowship with Christ.
 2. The church – NOTE also that Corinthians was written to the “church of God at Corinth”. In 1 Corinthians 11:18-26 he identifies one act they were to do as they “come together as the church” was to partake of the Lord's supper. Note also Acts 20:7.

When you examine what scripture says about the church and the kingdom, you can see distinctions as to their usage. The terms are not always interchangeable within every text. BUT our point is that when it comes to fellowship with God and Christ, they are synonymous. They consist of the same persons, the saved who belong to Christ. And in that they are clearly joined together. That leads to the question – Are you a part of His kingdom/church? Think about it!