

Presented by:  
Collinsville Church of Christ  
1400 Troy Road  
Collinsville, IL 62234

## **The Church – The Kingdom of God**

Jim Laws

All school-age children have some measure of understanding as to what a kingdom is. We understand that worldly kingdoms have subjects, territories, and laws, as well as rewards and punishments. History is full of kings and kingdoms. The Babylonian kingdom, the Syrian kingdom, the Medo-Persian, Egyptian, and the Macedonian are but a few that have become the subjects of historians, both ancient and modern. The casual student of the Bible has no trouble with the concept of a kingdom, as the Bible refers to such over and over again. In the Old Testament there are pages full of discussions of both kings and kingdoms to challenge the interest of the Bible student.

Actually, the Jews of Jesus' day had for a long time been looking forward to a coming kingdom. They had been thinking about it, and it was the object of their study for many years. They had been anticipating it, so they were quite ready when John and Jesus came and preached the kingdom. Their concept of the kingdom, though, was quite different from that of the Lord's. They were looking for a materialistic kingdom. They were looking for a kingdom of military power and strength to free them from the burden of Roman rule. Therefore, when Jesus and John came to the people preaching about the coming kingdom, they were ready for such, but their concept of the kingdom and that of the Lord's was quite different, indeed!

Jesus explained that His church was the kingdom which He intended to establish. From our reading of the Word of God, we find that it, too, has a ruler, with subjects, laws, rewards, and punishments. In Matthew chapter 16 Jesus is speaking to His disciples. He has just crossed over to the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, and He asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" (verse 13). The disciples gave Him various answers, which is but an indication of how some of the public had failed to understand Jesus and His divine mission. Then, he responded with, "Whom say ye that I am?" In other words, what do you say? Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of that great truth. Jesus had been rejected at Jerusalem, then later at Nazareth, and still later at Gadara. Yet, the disciples, even though still in their infancy as far as understanding the mission of Jesus, understood this point--that Jesus was God's Son, the Messiah predicted from the pages of the prophets. Upon hearing this good confession in Matthew 16, Jesus blesses Peter, saying, "Blessed art thou." Then, He says to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church." Notice, Jesus refers them to the church.

Then, in the very next verse (verse 19) Jesus continues His discussion about the church by using the term "kingdom." He uses the word "church" and the word "kingdom" interchangeably. This important passage teaches us this great truth, for, while many religious teachers today attempt to distinguish between the two, Jesus clearly used the words "church" and "kingdom" interchangeably, thereby showing that the two terms refer to one and the same thing.

Additionally, this passage teaches that the time of the church's (kingdom's) establishment cannot be too far away! Jesus used the term "kingdom" and "church" to mean the same thing, and of course, if Jesus used them in that fashion, so ought we to do.

These are very important considerations for the Christian. Any religious group which does not consider itself to be the kingdom of God, the church for which Jesus died, simply cannot claim to be the church of Christ. Human organizations can never equal or replace God's divine kingdom, the church.