

The Church: Christ's Kingdom

Joe Slater

Jesus taught His disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom (Matthew 6:10). Their prayer was answered within about three years as the Lord bought His church into existence on the first Pentecost Day after His resurrection (see Acts chapter 2)

Scripture teaches that the church is Christ's kingdom. After hearing Peter confess Him as the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus promised, "Upon this rock I will build My church . . . and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:18, 19). Either the church is the kingdom, or else Jesus built one thing and gave Peter the keys to something else!

We know that the church and kingdom are the same thing because God's word demonstrates it. Consider the following parallel:

THE LORD adds to the church those being saved (Acts 2:47).

GOD conveys into the kingdom those delivered from darkness (Colossians 1:13).

"The Lord" in Acts 2:47 is obviously the same as "God" in Colossians 1:13. And being saved is the same as being delivered from darkness. Therefore, being added to the church is the same as being conveyed into the kingdom.

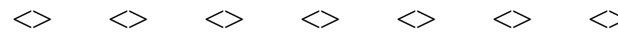
When the church is identified as a kingdom, Jesus is the King. As loyal subjects in His kingdom, then, what are our duties toward King Jesus?

First, we must obey Him. Being a king carries with it great authority. Even the subjects of earthly kings are to obey (1 Peter 2:13); how much more so the subjects of the King of Kings? Jesus said all authority,

both in Heaven and on earth, is His (Matthew 28:18). He is the author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9).

Second, we are to honor our King. Jesus is more than worthy of all the honor we can give (see Revelation 5:12, 13, "Worthy is the Lamb . . ."). Again, even earthly kings receive honor from their subjects (1 Peter 2:17); how much more should we honor the Prince of Peace? Jesus is honored in reverent worship, by godly living, and when His word is taught to the lost.

Over the past five weeks, we have seen how God's word describes the church as the body of Christ, bride of Christ, temple of God, family of God, and now as the kingdom of Christ. Each of these descriptions provides us with insights into our relationships with each other and with the Lord. Let us be happy to be a part of the church Jesus purchased with His own blood; and let us strive to serve God faithfully within it! "To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever, Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).



Heaven

It is to heaven that we owe our allegiance.

It is on heaven that we set our affection.

It is in heaven where we lay up our treasures.

It is because of heaven that we are pilgrims.

It is for heaven that we will sacrifice.

It is by heaven that all things are valued.

It is in heaven that we know that God dwells.

It is from heaven that we look for a Savior.

It is from heaven that we receive every perfect gift.

It is in heaven that our names are written.

James Winfred Clark (1923-1997)

Batten Down the Hatches!

". . . for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Rev 6:17 NASU).

Today, I took our Maltese for a walk; it was overcast. A woman at her car asked if it was going to rain. I said, "Looks like it." She said, "It's time to batten down the hatches." It has been a while since I heard this expression. It originally meant to secure a ship's hatch-tarpaulins, the coverings in the openings of the deck of a ship, especially when rough weather was expected. It is now a figurative expression meaning to prepare for a difficulty or crisis.

What preparations are we making for the ultimate crisis coming on this world? Is our ship sinking because we are letting the storms of life flood us? Will we sink or float? Jesus is coming again, and He won't announce His coming. There will be no weather report of this storm! Jesus has not given us signs of His coming. He will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. What thief announces his break-in before he arrives?

How do we "batten down the hatches"? In Jesus' parable, ten maidens were waiting for the groom to arrive. Five among them failed to prepare. They didn't have enough oil in their lamps to take with them when the groom arrived, and were told to go buy more. By the time they got back, the groom had arrived, the reception had begun, and the door was shut. They had not prepared for the coming (Matt. 25:1-13). Jesus says "watch, for you do not know the day nor hour the Son of Man comes" (v. 13).

How do we prepare if we do not believe in His coming? How do we prepare if we are not conscious that it can happen at any moment? The oil in our lives is whatever makes us prepared, namely, our commitment to the Lord in moral goodness, obedience, good works and service.

Let's make sure that we "batten down the hatches" for the Lord is coming!

Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)