

## BASIC BIBLE PRINCIPLES

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD

What is the Kingdom of God? Several answers are given to this question:

- Heaven, where God is
- The Church ruling spiritually on earth
- Jesus Christ ruling in men's hearts
- Jesus Christ ruling on the earth.

Only the last of these fits Bible teaching.

After His resurrection Jesus spent forty days with his disciples, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). At the end of this time the disciples "asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?". He did not tell them that their idea of the Kingdom was wrong, but said: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" (vv. 6,7).

Then Jesus ascended to heaven, and angels promised the disciples: "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (v. 11). Later Peter said: "[God] shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of *restitution* of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (3:20,21).

Putting these passages together, the Kingdom of God is to do with:

- The restoration of what once existed
- The nation of Israel
- The return of Christ
- The teachings of the Old Testament.

That the Kingdom of God once existed is shown by some words of King David: "and of all my sons . . . [God] hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel" (1 Chron. 28:5).

### Israel the kingdom of God

The Old Testament kingdom of Israel established under David was thus the kingdom of God. The various elements of this kingdom were all God's:

- 1 The king.** David said: "Howbeit the LORD God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for He hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father He liked me to make me king over all Israel" (1 Chron. 28:4).
- 2 The subjects.** The subjects of the nation of Israel were the Jews, of whom God said: "thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6).
- 3 The land.** The land of Israel is God's land: "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is Mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me" (Lev. 25:23).
- 4 The capital.** The capital of the kingdom of Israel was Jerusalem, of which the psalmist said: "For the LORD hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Ps. 132:13,14).
- 5 The law.** The law operating in Israel was given by God to Moses, who says: "I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you *the word of the LORD*" (Deut. 5:5).

## The future Kingdom

The basis of the Kingdom which Jesus Christ is to set up at his return is the kingdom of Israel restored, but this Kingdom will be worldwide in extent, though centred on Israel. This is shown by considering the future Kingdom under the same five headings:

- 1 The King.** Jesus Christ will rule Israel and the world as the descendant of King David: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk. 1:32,33).
- 2 The subjects.** Ezekiel prophesies: "Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen . . . and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land . . . one king shall be king to them all . . . And David My servant shall be king over them" (37:21-24). The Jews will be the subjects of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, who, as the Son (descendant) of David, will rule. His subjects will not be just Israel, however, but all the world: "all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him" (Ps. 72:11).
- 3 The land.** Notice the emphasis on the land of Israel in Ezekiel 37:21-24 quoted above: "I will . . . bring them into *their own land* . . . I will make them one nation *in the land* upon the mountains of *Israel*". The passage continues: "they shall dwell *in the land* that I have given unto Jacob My servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt" (v. 25). However, the rule of Christ will extend to all the earth: "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9); "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8).
- 4 The capital.** Jeremiah says: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem" (3:17).
- 5 The law.** Isaiah, also speaking of Jerusalem as the capital of the worldwide Kingdom of God, says: "many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (2:3).

## When will the Kingdom be established?

The Kingdom of God will be established when Christ returns in fulfilment of the promise to the disciples in Acts 1:11. Jesus Christ provides two indications of when this will occur:

**When Israel is restored:** "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24). After nearly two thousand years, the Jews now control Jerusalem again.

**When the world is in trouble:** "And there shall be . . . distress of nations, with perplexity . . . men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (vv. 25,26). This situation has arisen in the twentieth century, especially in recent years.

Following this situation:

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (v. 27);

"when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (v. 31).

The Kingdom of God will soon be established. Now is the time to prepare for it.

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