

THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH

The planning of the kingdom, the church, was conceived in the mind of God before the foundation of the world. This is clearly set forth in Ephesians 1:4 and 1 Peter 1:18-20.

The church of Christ, or kingdom as it was more commonly known in the Old Testament and spoken of in the New Testament, was prophesied to be established in 33 A.D. according to the pattern given by God. Two of the more specific prophecies include Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-4.

Daniel also had a lot to say concerning the establishment of the kingdom (the church of the New Testament). He says, "*And in the days of these kings [the Roman empire] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, [but] it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever*" (Dan. 2:44; 9:24-27).

Jesus promised, "*...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Matt. 16:18). It would be established after the Lord's death but during the lifetime of those who heard the Lord speak. Mark 9:1 makes this clear. Jesus said, "*...Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not*

taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." In this setting, the church and the kingdom are one and the same. Jesus uses the words "church" and "kingdom" interchangeably in Matthew 16:18-19.

When the apostle Peter, along with the other apostles, preached on the first Pentecost after the death of Jesus, he said "*...this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*" (Acts 2:16). The events of that day were the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom of God. Pentecost was the day the church/kingdom was established as per Acts chapter 2.

The church of Christ is made up of "*...fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*" (Eph. 2:19-20).

Christians, the Lord's people, have been "called out" of the world and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13). They continue living in His word. "*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42; cf. 1 Cor. 3:9).

—Garland M. Robinson