

## -KINGDOM OR CHURCH?-

There are millions of people who believe as they have been taught; that our Lord came to this earth to set up a church. Also they are taught that their particular branch or denomination is the one the Lord set up. They have a hazy notion that their church is a sort of kingdom thru which Christ is to rule here on the earth, but He Himself absent and far away.

The very first words in the N T present Him as Son of David and Son of Abraham. As Son of David, He was the lawful heir of the throne of David. It was His undisputed right to take the kingship and rule over His people, Israel. As Son of Abraham, He was heir to the land which was promised to Abraham and his seed forever. This all refers to a kingdom, not a church.

With His own mouth our Lord, in the forepart of His ministry, said; "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." (Mt. 4:23 and Mk. 1:15)

In the early part of His ministry it is said of Him; "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom." (Mt. 4:17) "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom." Mt. 9:35) "And it came to pass afterward, that He went thruout every city and village preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." (Lk. 8:1) In all this there is not a word about a church.

Nowhere in the O T can the word CHURCH be found. The prophecies are concerning the King and the kingdom; a literal one on the earth.

The first occurrence of the word CHURCH in all the Bible is at Mt. 16:18. It is after His rejection as King that the Lord begins to speak of a church.

Acts 7:38 speaks of a CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS, so there must have been a church during O T times. Of the four gospels, Mt. is the only one that uses the term CHURCH.

## -CHURCH-

The word CHURCH (Ekklesia) means "assembly" or a group of "called-out ones."

Altho not mentioned in the O T, the earliest church was THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS (Acts 7:38). This was the CONGREGATION OF ISRAEL.

The only places in the gospels that CHURCH appears are Mt. 16:18 and 18:17. It occurs twice in the latter and refers to the Synagogue. It may be that the former means the REMNANT of Israel of which the churches of Acts were mainly composed. It is true that the churches in Acts were many times just Synagogues. If the believers separated from the Synagogue to meet elsewhere, it was still a CHURCH.

There is another assembly or church mentioned in Acts. In 19:32,39,41 we find it. It was an unlawful assembly or mob. Verse 39 speaks of a lawful assembly.

From the usage of the term by the Holy Spirit, a CHURCH or ASSEMBLY might be a congregation, a mob, a Synagogue, a legal body, or a concourse for any purpose.

The word CHURCH appears in both the singular and plural in Acts, Rom., 1&2 Cor., Gal., 1&2 Thess., and the Rev. But in the epistles written after Acts it always appears in the singular.

After Acts 28:28 the CHURCH is connected with a SECRET. It is not THE ONE CHURCH, as some say, but is THE CHURCH of the ONE BODY. Its Head is Christ the Lord. It is not a Bride, but is the BODY of the HUSBAND. It is a NEW MAN created a HOLY TEMPLE, for an habitation of God thru the Spirit. It is connected with a secret which was hid in God from ages and generations until revealed after Acts.

So the CHURCH of the ONE BODY was not known by the prophets of the O T. Our Lord did not come to earth to establish it. But its members were chosen in the purpose and counsel of God before the overthrow of Gen. 1:2. It was founded on the apostles and prophets who were a gift from the ascended Lord. (Eph. 2:20 and 4:11)

**-WE TURN TO THE GENTILES-**

Up to chapter 10, all dealing in Acts is with Jews only. It is when the Jews begin to reject the re-offer of the King and the Kingdom that the Gentiles are turned to.

After Acts 10 it is still to the Jews first that the gospel is given and it is only after that they reject and are cut off that the Gentiles are grafted in.

This grafting in of the Gentiles in Acts is in no way the mystery of Eph. and Col. which had been hid from ages and generations in God. Any Jew could turn to Deut. 32:21 and find just what God was doing in Acts 10-28. Paul described it in Rom. 11, and the reference to Deut. 32 is plain. There Moses said; They have moved Me to jealousy With that which is not God;

They have **PROVOKED** Me to anger With their vanities;

I will move them to jealousy With those that are not a people; I will **PROVOKE** them to anger With a foolish nation.

It would be foolish to suppose that this breaking out of branches of Israel and grafting in wild olive branches is still going on today. There are no apostles now offering the King and the kingdom to Israel. This has not been done since Acts 28:28. This is indicated by the gospel of John which seems to have been written after the great national rejection, (His own received Him not). So if the King and the kingdom are not being offered, there can be no rejection and consequent breaking off. The wild olive branches were grafted in where the natural branches had been broken off.

"We turn to the Gentiles." These words were spoken by Paul. The turning was an act of the apostles. See Acts 13:46 and 18:6.

But the **TURNING** at Acts 28:28 was an act of God. It was God that sent salvation to the Gentiles. It was God Who at that point in history quit dealing with the Jews. It was God that took **SALVATION** from the house of Israel.

Each time Israel refused the Master's table set before them, the dogs (Gentiles) got more than they.

**-SATAN'S VICTORY-**

We probably do not have a record of all the attempts of Satan on the life of our Lord. From the slaying of the infants of Bethlehem to the execution on Calvary, Satan did not relax in his attempts to destroy the King of the Jews.

Not only did Satan wish to kill the King, but he tried in every way to prevent Israel from accepting the New Covenant. He knew that if Israel did accept the New Covenant, she would then become the promised treasure and a priestly nation. The world would be enlightened and the kingdom of darkness overthrown. So during our Lord's ministry, Satan saw to it that the King and the kingdom should both be rejected by Israel. In this way he would not only destroy Christ, but would make Israel guilty of His death and so they would be rejected by God and could not come into the blessings and ministry of the New Covenant.

Both parts of Satan's plans at this point failed. The Lord prayed for Israel's forgiveness, thereby giving them another chance to accept the King and the kingdom at a second coming. The other part of the plan failed in that the tomb could not hold the Lord, and He rose from among the dead ones.

The enemy did not give up, even tho apparently defeated in both attempts. He was still determined to keep Israel from her ministry and blessings under the New Covenant. He did his work well. The ministry of the 12 had a great beginning at Pentecost, but in a little while Israel at Jerusalem rejected the gospel and slew Stephen. That particular branch of God's chosen nation was cut off. It was not so long till a similar incident happened at Antioch. God began to graft in Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy and make her bear fruit, but to no avail. Finally at Rome, the last branch was broken off. Nothing was left but the bare stump. The nation which was chosen out of Ur of the Chaldees failed in its purpose of being a light to the Gentiles. It failed as being a priestly nation in the earth. The world was left in darkness.

-PROPOGANDA-

Like most Christians today, Satan did not know of the great power of the resurrection. If he had known this great fact in advance, he would have done everything in his power to keep our Lord from going to Calvary.

He soon realized his great mistake and failure. He had only been an agent in the slaying of the Lamb which was to take away the sins of the world. He found that he had been a party to the great sacrifice of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. No doubt he was thoroly ashamed and chagrined when he found that he had played right into the purpose of the ages.

So he immediately took steps to undo, if possible, what he had unwittingly helped to accomplish. He just had to do something about that resurrection. He needed agents to help with a subtle line of propaganda to deny the fact of the resurrection of the Son of God. His first attempt along this line was to hire the Roman soldiers to tell the story that while they slept the disciples came and stole the body away. Satan's agents have been telling this story with variations from that day till this. Most of the Jews believed it. Matt. 28:15.

The most common variation of the story was to focus attention on something else which would minimize the fact of resurrection. This was accomplished by keeping before the eyes of millions for many centuries a graven likeness of the Lord fastened to a Babylonian cross with nails. Such repetition is bound to have its effect. It is like Cato the Censor, who for a long time closed every speech he made in the Roman Forum with the words, "Carthage must be destroyed!"

So this Satan-inspired form of idolatry has cheated millions of Christians of the knowledge and experience of the power of the resurrection. It is probably the most popular form of idolatry during the past 1900 years. It not only has suppressed the fact of resurrection, but has hidden the fact of the ascension and seating of the Lord as Head of the Church.

Eph. 2. -IN TIMES PAST- (1)

Verses 1-3 give us a picture of the condition or state of the Gentile without salvation. It goes a little farther than Rom. 1. In Rom. the Gentiles were given up and given over because of the lusts of the flesh. But here in Eph. we have the Gentile unbeliever beset by a triumvirate of evils, THE WORLD, THE FLESH, and THE DEVIL.

In times past the Gentile unbeliever was conformed to the world and walked according to the course of the world. He kept up with the times. He did that which was the fashion. In the world, sin and all that goes with it is the accepted thing. Vile conversation is common. All kinds of questionable amusements are indulged in. The world has its religion. It is a religion of good works with a certain amount of taboos or "thou-shalt-not's". The religion of the world caters to the mind with its art and architecture and good music. But it was the world that hated the Lord and put Him to death. That world was the religious system of that day.

Altho similar in many respects to the world, the flesh has to do more with the selfish desires of the individual rather than the things that are the fashion. But the lusts of the flesh may consist in the higher things of art, music, and the sciences as well as the baser passions which lead to shame and the gutter. The god of the flesh is self. It has no regard for the rights and convenience of others. In the flesh a man will break every one of the last 5 of the Decalog. The world will make him break the first 5 which consist of his responsibility to God.

But these Ephesians were warned that they in their past state not only were dominated by the flesh and the course or fashion of the world, but in it all were energized by the devil. That made them to be children of disobedience. It was disobedience that brot death upon mankind in the first place.

Under the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil, men are by nature the children of wrath.

Eph. 2. -BUT GOD- (2)

Verses 3-10 give us the picture of the Gentile believer and his blessings which he receives thru identification with Christ. There are three steps in this identification, QUICKENED, RAISED, and SEATED.

1. At first glance we might think that this being quickened is the obtaining of eternal life. But it may go even farther than that. There is more to it than just a promise of being made alive some day in resurrection. Multitudes of Christians today need to be quickened. This quickening is one of the blessings mentioned in Eph. 1:3. It is something which must be taken hold of by faith, even as Israel had to go in and possess the land that was theirs by promise. It is closely related to the spiritual perception which Nicodemus could obtain only by being born from above, by the water of the Word applied by the Holy Spirit. Many believers are blind and have no spiritual perception. Salvation and being quickened are not the same thing, for those that are quickened are reminded that they have been saved by grace.

2. There is a further step that the believer may make in faith. He can be identified with Christ in His ascension. This is being raised to a higher realm. This is something which had not been possible before. Before this identification was only in death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord.

3. The last step given is that of being identified with the Lord in His position of being seated in heavenly places far above all principality and power.

It indeed makes one feel sorrowful to see the multitudes that fall in the wilderness without ever realizing these blessings in their lives. Potentially, every believer has every spiritual blessing that the Lord can offer.

Again the believer is reminded that he is saved by grace. There is no room for boasting, for it comes by faith, not by works. There is also promise of more blessings in the ages to come.

Eph. 2. -AT THAT TIME- (3)

At what time? What is the time element of verses 11 and 12? Is it the same as in verse 2?

In the preceding section they had been reminded of their salvation by grace on two different occasions. This is after the section dealing with their state by nature. So it remains that this then refers to a different time than it does in verse 2.

Paul is speaking to believers who had been saved during the Acts period of time. At that time they were grafted into the good olive tree as wild olive branches. All blessings which they received had flowed thru the channel which was Israel. They were blessed with faithful Abraham. Verses 11 and 12 list the disadvantages which were the lot of the Gentile during the Acts period, spoken of as AT THAT TIME. The disadvantages are 5;

1. During Acts the Gentile believer was without Christ (in the flesh). Christ, or the Messiah, had been promised only to Israel. The Messiah had never been promised to the Gentiles. Christ, as the Messiah, was the peculiar possession of Israel. All the Gentile could have was crumbs from the Master's table.

2. In Acts the Gentile believer was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel. As such, he was unable to claim by any right any of their blessings. Again he had to be satisfied with crumbs.

3. In Acts the Gentile believer was a stranger from the covenants of the promise. The land belonged to Israel. It was theirs by the promise made to their father Abraham.

4. In Acts the Gentile believer had no hope. This is not referring to salvation. That had been settled and done with. He had no hope of a better resurrection connected with a calling. That was to Israel only. He could partake of it, but it was not his by any right except grace.

5. In the world he was without a God. God had promised to be the God of Israel. Others had been given up. They were not a people. If God was to be the God of the Gentile, it would have to be elsewhere.

Eph. 2. -BUT NOW- (4)

Verses 13-22 constitute another dispensational section. 11 and 12 were concerning the Gentile believer during Acts. The words BUT NOW open up verse 13 and a passage that may be called TRUTH FOR TODAY.

At the great pronouncement of Acts 28:28, it is no mere turning of the apostle again to the Gentiles. It was an act of G.d. The SALVATION of God (that is Christ) was sent to the Gentiles. No longer could the Jew claim HIM as his Messiah. The commonwealth of Israel was dissolved. The covenants of promise had been withdrawn. No longer can the Israelite hope to be in the kingdom. In this world God is no longer Jehovah to Israel. This puts Israel on the same level with other nations. In the flesh there is now no difference between Jew and Gentile, but both have been reconciled in one body to God. With Israel no longer holding the pre-eminence, the Gentile is in a position to receive grace directly from God.

1. Now the Gentile is in Christ, the Lord and Savior of Jew and Gentile alike.

2. Now the Gentile has access to God because Christ has made peace. He, who at one time was afar off, has been made nigh.

3. The Gentile had at one time been an alien from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger from the covenants of the promise. That was what made him afar off and a stranger from God. Now he is no longer a stranger from God.

4. Instead of holding an inferior position, now the Gentile believer is on an equality and a fellowcitizen with every other saint. This citizenship is in the heavenlies. What a wonderful hope he has now!

5. In this world the Jew had claimed God as his God. The Gentile was without such a claim. But now the Gentile believer belongs to the intimate household of God, not in this world, but in heavenlies.

Paul was quite concerned that every believer, both Jew and Gentile, should know this blessed truth and accept by faith a place in this new dispensation.

Eph. 2. -THE FOUNDATION- (5)

We have just studied 4 sections of Eph. 2. They are concerning the Gentiles and may be outlined thus;

1. Past state.....2:1-3.
2. Present state.....2:4-10.
3. Past position.....2:11,12.
4. Present position.....2:17-22.

In his past state he had been without salvation and was a child of wrath by nature.

In his present state he is identified with Christ in life and exaltation. (Saved by grace)

In the past he held an inferior position because of flesh, and had no claims on God in the world.

In his present position he is in Christ, a part of the NEW MAN, a part of the HOLY TEMPLE, and a member of the family of God.

This position and structure is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. This is a new order. It has nothing to do with the prophets of the O T or the apostles of the kingdom. The apostles of the new order were given as a gift to the church by the ascended Lord (Eph. 4:11). Prophets were also given in this new order. These were followed by evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The Holy Apostles and prophets of this new order are again mentioned in Eph. 3:5. Do not confuse these in any way with the old order of the kingdom and its gospel.

During Acts there were at least two gospels preached; the gospel of the Circumcision and the gospel of the Uncircumcision. Both have been put away. Now we have the good news of the dispensation of the Mystery.

Gentiles today do not need to be reminded of the position Gentiles held during the Acts period. We no longer think of the difference between Jew and Gentile when the Jew was first.

May God give you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation that you may know (1) What is the hope of His calling, (2) What are the riches of His inheritance in the saints, and (3) What is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, to the end that you may take by faith all spiritual blessings which are yours in Christ Jesus.

-THE EDITOR'S DESK-

TRUTH FOR TODAY is the oldest program over station WRSW. Feb. 27 was the 126th program. The radio Bible class program is every Tuesday night at 7.

The regular Bible class meets at my home Tuesday nights at 7:45. All are welcome to this class. We have managed to keep the lane clear so far this winter for the class.

This paper, TRUTH FOR TODAY, is free to all who desire to have it. We have managed to put it out each month with one exception. You can help us double the circulation by giving us names and addresses of those who might be interested. We finally got all our addressing machine and hope it works this time.

Sorry to make several wait for their COMPANION BIBLES. They have been selling faster than I can get them from England. I have a few ahead now. Price, \$10.80 postpaid.

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