

LESSON 2

CHURCH AND KINGDOM DEFINED

By D.B. Ray

The Greek word *ekklesia*, which has been rendered Church in the New Testament, according to the best Greek Lexicons and writers, means an assembly, or congregation of persons called out from among the people for a specific purpose.

Liddell and Scott, in their Greek Lexicon, define the word *ekklesia*, "an assembly of citizens summoned by the crier, the legislative assembly."

Dean Trench, in his synonyms of the New Testament (p.17) says: *Ekklesia*, as all know, was the lawful assembly in a free Greek city of all those possessed of the rights of citizenship, for the transaction of public affairs."

Ed. Robinson, in his *Lexicon of the New Testament*, says: "Ekklesia, a convocation, assembly, congregation. In the literal sense, a popular or rather assembly composed of persons legally summoned."

All lexicographers and critics agree substantially in the above definition. The New Testament meaning of *Ekklesia* - Church - demands an assembly of believers, called out from the world. The word *Ekklesia* is composed of two Greek words - *Kalein*, to call, and *ek*, out of; therefore, the word *ekklesia* literally means the called out.

The word, church is never, in the Scriptures, applied, to an hierarchy, whether civil or religious, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church or the Episcopal Church. Such use is a gross abuse of the word church.

Ekklesia, the Greek word from which we get the word church, is used in the New Testament one hundred and fifteen times, and is used in the singular to designate a local congregation or the church institution seventy-six times. It is used in the plural to designate local churches thirty-six times, and is used three times to designate a worldly assembly or mob.

In Acts 19:32, referring to the mob, it is said "the assembly was confused," and in verse 39, "assembly" has the word ekklesia in the Greek; and when the town clerk had thus spoken, "he dismissed the assembly" ekklesia, which was the unlawful assembly, which had been crying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

It is abundantly evident from the testimony of Greek Lexicons and the New Testament use, that the primary and literal meaning of the word ekklesia is assembly. Describing the institution of Christ it simply means Christ's assembly, called out from the world to execute His laws. The New Testament speaks of "the Churches of the Gentiles" (Rom. 16:4); "the Churches of Christ" (Rom 16:16); "So ordain I in all Churches" (1 Cor.7:17); "the Churches of Galatia" (1 Cor. 16:1); "the Churches of Asia" (1Cor. 16:19); and the "Churches of Macedonia" (2 Cor. 8:1).

We here give the literal definition of a New Testament Church, thus:

A church of Christ is an assembly of baptized believers joined together in the doctrine and fellowship of the gospel.

Of this definition, J. D. Murphy, D. D. says: "You have believers, baptized, joined and hence 'Church.' Here you have a 'threefold cord' that cannot be broken. Such a definition is exhaustive and final, and defies criticism." Dr. Murphy, like his celebrated uncle, A. P. Williams, ranked, in his day, among the very best scholars and critics, (especially concerning the Church question), in the state of Missouri. He was an able preacher as well as theologian.

We must be excused, for feeling a sense of pride on reaching the bedrock definition of Church, which is "exhaustive and final, and defies criticism." This much gained and much has been done towards clearing up the dense fog and mist that overhang the "church question." A Church of Jesus Christ is not a hierarchy; it is not a state institution; it is not a provincial organization; but it is rather a brotherhood where all have equal privileges to take part in the administration of the laws of the Kingdom of Christ.

A Church of Jesus Christ has no earthly human head, no presiding elders, or preachers with authority over the Churches. The elders and deacons, including the ablest ministers, are

officially servants of the Churches. The only authority by which they rule is by preaching (feeding the flock) and by example. There is no ecclesiastical authority on earth except that of a Church of Jesus Christ. All the actions and transactions of associations, councils, and conventions have no more authority over the Churches than the pope himself, who is anti-Christ.

The Kingdom of Christ is the organized government over which Jesus Christ is sole Law-Giver and Ruler, and Whose laws are administered through His Churches as His executives.

From these definitions of the Kingdom and Church of Christ, which are thoroughly sustained by the New Testament, we see that the Kingdom and Church are correlative. The organic Kingdom of Jesus Christ does not exist without the Churches, and the Churches cannot exist without the Kingdom. The government on earth, over which Jesus Christ is sole King and Ruler, is always mentioned in the scriptures in the singular number. There is but one King and one Kingdom.

Revelation 11:15

The prayer so often repeated for "the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ," is absurd. It is based upon a wrong translation of Revelation 11:15. The KJV translation has it: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become [the kingdoms] of our Lord, and of His Christ;

and He shall reign for ever and ever." The term "kingdoms" as used the second time in this passage was supplied by the translators. It is not in the Greek New Testament at all. The new translation, reads: "And, the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, the kingdoms of the world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ," etc.

Every reference in the Bible, whether in the Old or New Testament, points out this Kingdom in the singular number. The organic Kingdom of Christ is one. Jesus Christ is the only Law-Giver and Ruler in His own Kingdom. This great truth should be written in large capitals in letters of gold. Every attempt to legislate for Christ amounts to usurpation and is akin to treason and popery.

On the wonderful occasion on the Mount of Transfiguration, where Moses, Elijah, and Christ (the representatives of the three great dispensations) had met, the voice of the Father, from the overshadowing cloud, was heard saying "This is My beloved, Son, in Whom I am well, pleased: hear ye Him." When the three apostles arose from their fright "they saw no man save Jesus only." Peter, in his confusion, was willing to have three tabernacles on the mount; one for Moses the law-giver; one for Elijah the great prophet; and one for Christ the great teacher. But he was mistaken. The law and the prophets were until the ministry of John the Baptist, "since that time the Kingdom of God is preached." "Jesus only" was left as Law-Giver; "Hear ye Him."

The great commission given by the Master reads thus: "And, Jesus came and, spake unto them, saying, All power is given

unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and, of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matt. 28:18-20.

They were to teach them to observe all things whatsoever Jesus had commanded. Nothing is to be taught, as binding upon the conscience of men that has not been commanded by Jesus Christ Who is the sole Ruler in His kingdom. The laws, ordinances and commandments of the King are contained in the New Testament, which is His last will and testament. Those who add to this code of laws do so at their own peril.

BAPTISTS DO THINGS

"By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them"

The Editor of the Western Recorder, J. W. Porter, says: First of all, and essential to all, is soul liberty, which from the beginning, has been the trophy of the Baptists. That the right to worship God, according to the dictates of the individual conscience, is a debt that the world owes exclusively to the Baptists, is a closed question in all well-informed circles.

A few quotations from accredited historians will suffice in this connection:

Bancroft says that "Freedom of conscience, unlimited freedom of mind, was from the first the trophy of the Baptists."

Judge Story writes: "In the code of laws celebrated, by them in Rhode Island, we read for the First time since Christianity ascended the throne of the Caesars, the declaration that conscience shall be free, that men should not be persecuted for worshiping in the way they believed right.

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A corollary of soul liberty is the entire separation of church and state. For this Baptists have suffered through all the ages, and their tragic contention is traced through blood and tears. Mrs. Hutchinson, during the reign of Charles I, wrote of the persecuted Baptists: "O pitying skies, is there nowhere beneath your encircling dome a land where this agony can cease, because the soul is free?"

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The government under which we live was formed and fashioned upon the model of a Baptist church. Thomas Jefferson frequently attended a Baptist church near Monticello, Va., of which the Rev. Andrew Tribble was pastor. Mr. Jefferson, who often witnessed the congregation transacting business, was much impressed with their democratic way of doing things, and concluded that their plan of government would be the best possible one for the American colonies." Mrs. James Madison says: "Mr. Jefferson did gather those views from a Baptist Church."

The world is under everlasting obligation to the Baptists for restoring the commission to its rightful place in the economy of gospel activities. It remained for William Carey, a Baptist, to institute the work of modern missions. Until Carey sailed for India, in 1793, there had not been a foreign missionary for centuries. Since then God has honored the Baptists by making them pioneers in this great work; should they not be more zealous and abounding than all other people? If God shall demand of us according as He has bestowed upon us - and He will - surely our obligation is great. The fields are white unto the harvest, and God demands of us that we send laborers into the harvest. When a Baptist ceases to be a missionary, he ceases to be a Baptist, and is, therefore, sailing under false colors. All of the wonderful efforts to evangelize the world are solely due to Baptist initiative.

To a Baptist, also, is due the Sunday School movement of our age. And just here it is well to correct an error that has long been prevalent, and which should long ago have been corrected. Rev. B.W. Spilman, of the Sunday school Board, has already pointed out that William Fox, a Baptist deacon, organized the first modern Sunday school in the year 1783. It is generally claimed that Robert Raikes inaugurated the Sunday school movement, but in spite of this claim it is unquestionably true that the school that was started by Mr. Raikes was only a day school, in which the Bible was never taught though the school met on Sunday. His school was solely secular in its character, and much after the order of our present public school, and perished without a successor.

There is not the remotest suspicion of contemporary evidence that Robert Raikes ever had anything whatever to do with a Sunday School.

It is likewise worthy of note, in this connection, that the author of the "*Uniform Series of International Lessons*" was B.F. Jacobs, a Baptist. He was also chairman of the Executive Committee and probably America's greatest Sunday School expert. Miss Dimmock, an elect Baptist lady, gave to the world, the Cradle Roll which has now become so important a factor in Sunday school work.

Marshall Hudson, in 1890, organized a Baraca class at Syracuse, N.Y., and under the Baraca banner there are now enlisted well nigh a million men and women. Surely the world owes a debt of lasting gratitude to this Baptist brother for instituting a movement which has been of so great benefit to mankind.

The Baptists have preserved, to the world, the New Testament idea of a church. They are the only people who through the ages have contended, or who are now contending, for a regenerated church membership. To be sure many of the churches preach regeneration, and have within their membership many regenerate members, but this in nowise affects our contention that a Baptist church is the only church that stands for a regenerated membership only.

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It is worthy, too, of note that the largest gift ever made to the cause of education was given by a Baptist. This was a single gift by John D. Rockefeller of \$31,000,000.00. Particularly in America, Baptists are, in influence, numbers and money, leaders in educational affairs. There are now nearly sixty thousand students in American Baptist schools, colleges and universities.

Baptists must be credited, too, with having demonstrated the truth of Christ's prophecy concerning the church. He predicted the perpetuity of His churches and He has used the Baptists to verify His prophecy. It is not necessary to trace the succession through the ages to demonstrate their continued existence from the days of Christ.

John A. Broadus, in his Commentary on Matthew, says: "All earthly things go down through these dread gates, but Christ's church, for which He gave Himself, will never cease to exist."

James P. Boyce speaking of the Baptists, says: "As the successors of a glorious spiritual ancestry, illustrated by heroic martyrdom, by the profession of noble principles, by the maintenance of two doctrines, as the church of Christ; which He has ever preserved as the witness for His truth, by which he has illustrated His wonderful ways, and shown that His promises are sure and steadfast."

Dr. T. T. Eaton: "Those who oppose Baptist succession have no logical ground to stand on in organizing a church out of material, furnished by other churches, and with those baptized by regularly ordained Baptist ministers."

It has been well said, "the past is safe, we can look back and see it; the present is safe, we can look about us and see, and the future is safe, though we may not see it for "Behind the dim unknown, standeth God in the shadows, Keeping watch above His own."

See Baptist Message. Recently published by the Nashville S. S. Board, pp. 110-116.