

LESSON 5

Various Uses Of "Kingdom Of God"

By D.B. Ray

The failure upon the part of many Bible students to mark the proper distinction between the various uses of the phrases "Kingdom of God," "Kingdom of Heaven," has caused much confusion and false teaching concerning the Church and Kingdom question. The terms "Kingdom of God," or its equivalent, is used in several senses in the Bible.

First: The phrase "Kingdom of God" is used in the Sacred Scriptures to indicate God's general providence exercised over the universe in all ages. "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens, and His Kingdom ruleth over all." Ps. 103:19. Also, 1 Chron. 29:10-12; Ps. 22:18; Dan. 4:17; Ps. 145:11-13. In this Kingdom, of God's general government, all creatures have their being, from the tallest angel in heaven to the tiniest insect upon the earth. In this Kingdom, God rules over all, including the sun, moon and stars, with all the heavenly orbs; and also the vegetable, as well as the animal kingdoms of earth, down to the tiny "lily of the valley." In this general universal kingdom are comprehended the angelic hosts and redeemed in heaven, as well as all nations of men, good and bad, that dwell upon the earth. But this kingdom that "ruleth over all" is not the organic Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Second: The phrase "Kingdom of God" is used in the Word of God to indicate God's organized political Commonwealth of

Israel. The political government of Israel is called "the kingdom of the Lord," 2 Chron. 13:8. Under the title of Jerusalem, the Lord, through Ezekiel, spake to the Israelites of His kindness in caring for them, saying: "And thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom." Ezek. 16:13. The Jewish nation was God's ancient political kingdom. It was fully organized at Mount Sinai, in Arabia, four hundred and thirty years after the call of Abraham.

The Lord speaks through Moses at Mount Sinai, saying to the Israelites: "And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." Ex. 19:6. The Gentiles had no citizenship in this political government of God.

Third: The phrase "Kingdom of God" is used in the Scriptures to indicate God's special, providential care exercised over His chosen people. Rom. 14:17; Matt. 21:43. "The Kingdom of God, shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," This scripture has special reference to God's providence over the Jewish nation; but now they are about to be given up to destruction. This special providence has been transferred to another "nation," the Church, which is called a "holy nation," I Peter 2:9.

Fourth: "The Kingdom of Heaven" as used in the Scriptures sometimes has reference to heaven above where Christ now intercedes for His people. Referring to His heavenly home, Paul says: "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and

will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom; to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." 2 Tim. 4:18. Again, the same apostle says: "And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." 1 Cor. 15:49-59. The apostle here describes the heavenly state as the kingdom of God, the home of the pure and holy. This is quite different from the organic Kingdom of Christ, which is on earth. After Paul was stoned at Iconium, he and Barnabas fled to other cities, and finally returned through Iconium to Antioch, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God." Acts 14:22. Already in the organic Kingdom of Christ, they were taught to expect much tribulation before they entered the Kingdom of God in heaven.

Many other Scriptures refer to the glorious Kingdom above, where our loved ones have gone. See Luke 13:28; 14:15; 22:16; Matt. 7:21; 8:11.

Peter evidently refers to the same heavenly Kingdom when encouraging the disciples to "diligence" in Christ's service, he says: "For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Pet. 1:11.

Fifth: The phrase "Kingdom of God" is used in the Scriptures in describing God's organized spiritual government. This is sometimes called the new Kingdom. This organic Kingdom

of Christ is frequently pointed out by the prophets as the Kingdom of God. Isaiah says: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Isa. 9:6-7.

David, as the king of Israel, was a type of Christ; so the organic political kingdom under David was a type of the organic Kingdom of Christ.

The prophet Hosea, foretelling the dispersion of the Israelites and their dwelling many days "without a king," says: "Afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days." Hos. 3:5. Here Christ is evidently referred to as David, the King of Israel. While Christ is David in antitype, it would be absurd and foolish to contend that David of the Old Testament is identical with Christ the prophetic David of the New Testament. In like manner, it is just as absurd to contend that the ancient government of David is identical with the Kingdom of Christ, because Christ's organic Kingdom is called by the same name as the ancient political kingdom of Israel. The throne or government of David was a type of the throne or government of Christ. But it would be absurd to contend that the

throne of David and the throne of Christ are identical. They are only the same as the type is the anti-type. One is the figure or representative of the other, and is called by the same name.

John the Baptist is called "Elijah the prophet" because he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. It would be no more absurd to contend that Elijah, the prophet, who went to glory in a chariot of fire, and John the Baptist, who was beheaded because of his faithfulness in reprovng sin, were identically one and the same man, than to contend that the Jewish political commonwealth of Israel is identical and the same as the New Testament, spiritual, called-out, Kingdom of God, were the same institution.

It was the Jewish political government that crucified the Lord of glory. Jesus Christ came to His own, but His own received Him not. They became the betrayers and murderers of the Prince of Life. It is too absurd to be entertained for a moment that the Church, the Bride of Christ, was the murderer of the Bridegroom. Hagar, the bondwoman, was the representative of the Jewish hierarchy in the time of Christ on earth, while Sarah, the free woman, and lawful wife of Abraham, was the representative of the New Jerusalem, which was from above. In Paul's allegory, the carnal Jews were represented by Ishmael, the son of Hagar, who persecuted Isaac, while the members of the true Church, are represented as children of the free woman, having been born by miracle, as was Isaac, and belonged to the Jerusalem, which is from above, and the mother of us all.

Paul says, "Cast out the bond woman and her son; for the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman." Our Pedobaptist friends seem determined to keep in the bond woman and her son, in violation of the instruction of the inspired apostle.

All persecuting governments, whether political or religious, possess the spirit of Ishmael, the son of the bond woman. But Christ came into the world to break off the chains of spiritual and political slavery, set the captives free, and establish His Church and Kingdom, to destroy despotism and reign over a ransomed world forever. Whom "the Son shall make free are free indeed."

We quote Dr. J. B. Gambrell, in *The Baptist Message* page, 127, as following: "The opening of America was, doubtless under God's plan for bringing on a better day for humanity. Here, in the wilderness, the people who held the doctrines preached first in the wilderness of Judea were to demonstrate afresh the power of truth to liberate an enslaved race. It was no accident that every Baptist stood for the independence of the colonies. Their faith committed them to liberty. The war over and religious liberty embedded in the constitution of the United States, by the efforts of the Baptists, America set out on a far-reaching demonstration. The world had been tutored into the belief that neither state nor church could live unless they were bound together, so that the blood of each could flow through the veins of the other. All the hierarchical churches had inculcated this heresy, and all the monarchies had done the same. Against the whole of it, whether in protestant or popish

communities, the Baptists opposed the unbound individualism of the New Testament, and the demonstration proceeded." Baptist Message, page 127.

"The Frenchman who gave to America the statue of "Liberty Enlightening the World," had a clear vision of the far-reaching and irresistible influence of the democratic demonstration going on in America.

Within a century the spirit of individualism has largely subverted the old orders in Europe. France is democratic, has cast off popery as an annex to the state and has granted religious freedom. Italy has a constitution and enjoys free worship. Fifty years ago, Baptists were imprisoned in Germany. Recently the Empress made a personal offering to a Baptist Church in Berlin. Russia has granted a parliament and freedom of worship. Turkey is to have a constitution. England is almost as democratic as America. Spain, Portugal, and all the rest are coming on. We are in the early hours of a great individualism, for which our Baptists fathers, in dens and caves, in wilderness and prisons, on giblets and in flames, have prayed and waited." J. B. Gambrell, in The Baptists Message, page 127.