

BULLETIN

Church of Christ Stallings Drive

Nacogdoches, Texas
P.O. Box 630035 (936) 564-7286

Sunday, April 20, 2008

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

Sometimes we try to make a distinction between the church and the kingdom. We say that the church is the *ecclesia*, the called out body of God's people. That is what church means. However, *ecclesia* is a neutral word—you have to determine by context whether the called out body or assembly is a religious gathering, or perhaps, a civil gathering, such as the one in Acts 19:41. "And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly." Kingdom refers to the rule or reign of God in the hearts of men and women; it is spiritual in nature and intent. "Nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). Sometimes, though, kingdom refers to earthly kingdoms; in this case, kingdom still embodies the rule of a king, but the usage is secular rather than spiritual. "Then Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established" (1 Kings 2:12).

Is it helpful to understand that church means one thing and kingdom means another? Yes. Any honest attempt to better understand Bible teaching about any important subject is helpful. We need to be careful, though, about making some kind of artificial distinction that the Bible does not make. We could say that God has always had a kingdom. That is, He has always had people who yielded to His reign, His authority. The Israelites were to become "a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6). Has He always had a church? In terms of the

Messianic church or kingdom that prophets spoke of, no. Many passages anticipate the coming kingdom (Isaiah 2; Joel 2; Daniel 2). If these passages anticipate a kingdom to come, would that not mean that the thing of which they spoke, the kingdom, had not yet come? Yes! What about the congregation, or church, or assembly in the wilderness (Acts 7:38)? Did Israel constitute the church or kingdom of which the prophets spoke? No! Were the Israelites, God's chosen, called-out special people? Yes! Taking one term or phrase and then constructing an entire, exclusive body of teaching can be dangerous. Systematizing the teaching of the Bible can result in teaching that is incomplete or inaccurate.

When Jesus said, "I will build my church," He was speaking of the same thing the prophets of old spoke of. In the same context Jesus said: "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). Clearly, Jesus meant that the church and kingdom were one and the same. By the giving of His life on the cross, Jesus built His church—the called-out spiritual body of people who would respect His authority. By the giving of His life on the cross, Jesus established His kingdom—the Messianic kingdom—people who would respect the will of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Fine-line distinctions where there are none do not help.

Randy Harshbarger

MY RULES FOR LIFE

1. I try never to say anything behind a man's back that would give my the least embarrassment to say to his face.
2. I try never to speak back to personal critics—friends do not need to hear the defense and enemies would not believe it.
3. Every day I greet every person I see with a smile and make a special effort to do so if the person is poor or in unfortunate circumstances.
4. The first thing when I awake in the morning, I plan what my duty for the day is and try to go beyond it.
5. Every day I read from the Bible and some other good book—feeding the mind and soul is more important than feeding the body.
6. I try to pay every debt I owe on time and always save something from every paycheck, however small.
7. I like people and never harbor any malice or hatred toward any person in the world; I like places and have yet to be anywhere that I do not like—I go there with the intention of liking the place. By George Dehoff

F Y I : For your information....

Comments in preparation for the Lord's Supper: April 27 - Glenn Millard

Sick: Continue to remember Ronnie Westmoreland, Allan Balch and others who are ill. Thetys Beard is taking therapy at home and continuing to improve. Erna Patric, mother of Debbie Sikes is not doing well; Debbie is staying here in Nacogdoches most of the time. Aulie Lilly and McNeil Grimes have been out this past week. Check on these and see if you can be of any help.

Shut-Ins: J.D. Blankenship; Ethel Burkett; Pauline Hicks; Myrtle McCall; Wayne Polk; Jimmie Standley, Auline Whitaker. Remember these in your prayers and see if you can be of some encouragement to them.

The **Thursday evening SFA class** will meet in the home of Doug & Misty Bowlin. Meet at the building at 7:00 for a ride.

The **Ladies' class** will meet in the home of Barbara Bolls with Darlene Hicks assisting. Virginia Mathews will be teaching Lesson 6 from our book.

Bible Reading Schedule: April 20-1 Sam. 30,31, Luke 17:20-37; April 21-2 Sam. 1-3, Luke 18:1-17; April 22-2 Sam. 4-6, Luke 18:18-43; April 23-2 Sam. 7-9, Luke 19:1-28; April 24-2 Sam. 10-12, Luke 19:29-48; April 25-2 Sam. 13,14, Luke 20:1-26; April 26-2 Sam. 15,16, Luke 20:27-47.

I am beginning a **meeting** this morning with the church in LaPorte, Texas. I have been with these folks before and look forward to the week of preaching and worship. Ronnie Westmoreland is the preacher for this congregation; it will be good to visit with Ronnie and Gail. There is a **meeting** this week in Crockett, at the South Loop Church of Christ, Chuck Durham preaching. Details posted.

Wednesday Evening— April 23		Schedule of Services	
Scripture Reading	Eric Sparks	Sunday: Bible Classes	9:30 A.M.
1 Song & Invitation	Aaron Martinez	Worship	10:15 A.M.
Exhortation	Todd Reichert	Worship	6:00 P.M.
Closing Prayer	James Kittrell	Wednesday: Bible Classes	7:00 P.M.