

The Church You Can Read About in the Bible
The Nature of the Church #3
The Government of the Church

Intro: This year one of our themes is "The church you can read about in the Bible."

In our first lesson we looked at what the church is.

In our second lesson we looked at Jesus' promise to build His church.

In our third lesson we learned how people can become a member of the Lord's church.

Now we are looking at the question, "What did God intend that the church be and do?" What was His purpose for establishing the church? What is its nature? What is its mission or work?

One way to answer that question is to look at the way the church is described in Scripture.

In our first lesson we saw that it is described as the temple of God.

In our second lesson we saw that it is described as the body/bride of Christ.

In our third less we saw that it is described as the kingdom of God; and we noticed that the church as kingdom suggests several important truths:

The church is the fulfillment of the OT promise of the coming King and His kingdom.

The governing authority of the kingdom is the king, Jesus Christ.

We are his soldiers in the battle for human minds and hearts.

We are merely aliens and strangers on this earth.

We are a part of the only thing that will ultimately last.

Let's think a little more about the nature of the church/kingdom's government.

The church as a kingdom suggests that the government of the church is a monarchy, not a democracy.

Most people today are quite used to the concept of democracy. It is a wonderful concept of government among men. In a democracy the authority belongs to the people and flows to the government. It is government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

However the church/kingdom is not a democracy but a monarchy; and such forms of government are rare today. We may think of Great Britain which has had a king and/or queen through the years; but that king or queen is but a figure-head or ceremonial role in what is a constitutional monarchy.

However Jesus is no figurehead. He is in fact the absolute monarch of His kingdom:

"And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all." (Ephesians 1:22–23)

The Kingdom of Persia--A Model of a Kingdom from Scripture

In the book of Esther we can see a kingdom in action.

The Persian Empire was one of the most extensive kingdom in the ancient world. Most people would have never had the opportunity to see the king at all since they lived so far away; yet they were obligated as citizens to obey the king's orders.

You remember that Esther made her appeal to the king Ahasuerus to protect her people from the wicked plans Haman had made to destroy them. The book of Esther records the king's command:

Now you write to the Jews as you see fit, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for a decree which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's signet ring may not be revoked."

So the king's scribes were called at that time in the third month (that is, the month Sivan), on the twenty-third day; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces which extended from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces, to every province according to its script, and to every people according to their language, as well as to the Jews according to their script and their language. And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horses, riding on steeds sired by the royal stud. In them the king granted the Jews who were in each and every city the right to assemble and to defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate the entire army of any people or province which might attack them, including children and women, and to plunder their spoil, on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar). A copy of the edict to be issued as law in each and every province, was published to all the peoples, so that the Jews should be ready for this day to avenge themselves on their enemies. The couriers, hastened and impelled by the king's command, went out, riding on the royal steeds; and the decree was given out in Susa the capital." (Esther 8:8-14, NASB)

Notice these features of the kingdom at work:

The king responded to Esther's request by using his absolute authority as king over Persia. He was the ultimate authority.

He delegated Mordecai to express an order to preserve the Jewish people. The king gave him his signet ring to seal the document.

Scribes were called in to record the king's authorized decree.

Couriers were sent out into all the empire to announce the order in the language of the different peoples of the empire.

The governors, satraps, and princes of the provinces were authorized to execute the orders of the king. The law was irrevokable.

What they did was exactly what the king had decreed.

This model of a kingdom at work may well describe the government of the kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of Heaven

God as creator has all authority to make laws.

He is the ultimate authority as creator
His will is absolute.

He has entrusted his ruling authority to Jesus Christ.

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matthew 28:18)

Jesus has as it were the Father's signet ring. Whatever he commands, he commands in the name of the heavenly Father.

The king's will has been written by the king's scribes--the apostles and prophets.

Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit Jesus' apostles and prophets wrote down the message of the gospel for His kingdom.

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

(John 16:13, NASB)

If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. (1

Corinthians 14:37, NASB)

The king's will is proclaimed by his evangelists and executed by his overseers.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11–13, NASB)

Though we live in a world where everyone feels they are entitled to their "say" and where often the church will change in response to the changing mood of the society around them, the true disciples will never forget who's in charge!

We have every right to ask anyone who comes with a message, "When and where did Jesus say that?!" Where is it written in the word of God?

Conclusion: The description of the church as the kingdom of Christ will give us real clarity about the nature of the church--what it is to be and do. The church shows an understanding of its nature when we submit to Jesus as our king, spreading the good news of His kingdom, fighting the good fight, setting our minds on spiritual things, and living in anticipation of the day when He will deliver His kingdom up to the Father.