

says, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them” (Acts 8:5). Continuing, we read, “But when they believed Philip *preaching things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women*” (Acts 8:12).

So what do we have? We see how the Lord instructed the apostles concerning *the kingdom of God*, and then Philip preached *Christ* to the Samaritans. But, amazingly, in doing so he also preached *the kingdom of God* to them! Why was there so much emphasis on *the kingdom or the church*? Because it was the culmination of God’s efforts for mankind; it was the vehicle through which He would provide salvation. It was from God, it had been prophesied, the Lord had promised it, and the saved were added to it! *Its importance cannot be overstated.*

Yes, we often hear people saying the church is not important and that we should not talk about it so much. It is true that the church is not *the savior*, since it is made up of *the saved*, who are human beings; but *Christ is the savior of the church*, having died for it and having purchased it with His own blood, and therefore we must be members of it if we want to be saved and to go to heaven.

If you remove from the New Testament scriptures all of the things said about *the kingdom or the church*, how much would be left?

Furthermore, if *Christ* built *the church*, is head of it and savior of it, serving as its foundation and calling it by His name, if He has promised to return for it and present it to God, how could anyone think that it is unimportant? And how will men know about it, of its divine origin, of its purpose and mission, and of its tremendous place of importance in God’s overall plan unless we preach it to the world?

In conclusion, let us appreciate the church, love it as the Lord loves it, be thankful to be members of it, and let us eagerly tell others about it so that it may truly spread throughout the entire world. As Paul said, “*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*” (Ephesians 3:21)

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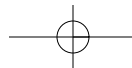
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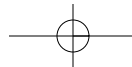
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People often say, “I’m not interested in ‘the church’ — in organized religion. Just preach Christ, and don’t bother me about the church.”

Throughout the Old Testament a great deal was said about the coming of a spiritual *kingdom*. Isaiah foretold that in the last days *the Lord’s kingdom* would be established (Isaiah 2:2,3). Daniel said that God would set up a *kingdom* which would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). Joel said that the Lord’s Spirit would be poured out upon all flesh at that time (Joel 2:28,29), and Peter explained that Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled in the momentous happenings recorded in Acts 2.

John the Baptist came preaching that *the kingdom of heaven* was near at hand (Matthew 3:1,2), and Christ said that some who were standing in His presence would not taste of death until they saw *the kingdom* come with power (Mark 9:1). Finally, Christ said that He would build His *church* upon the rock — the fact that He was the Son of God (Matthew 16:18,19; 1 Corinthians 3:11). He promised that He would give to the apostles the keys of *the kingdom*, the authority to tell men and women what they could do to enter

the kingdom or *the church*.

In Acts 2 we see that the prophecies were fulfilled concerning the establishment of *the kingdom* in Jerusalem, as the power of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles and they began to speak with tongues, or in other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance. This was *the kingdom* that John had said was soon to be established, the one that was from heaven, and the one Christ had said He would build. The apostles, then, used the keys of *the kingdom* or *the church* as they preached the gospel for the first time and revealed to sinful men how they could be saved. Those who heard, believed, repented of their sins, and were baptized for the remission of their sins were saved and added to *the church* by the Lord himself.

The kingdom and *the church* were therefore the same institution, being *the house of God* or *the spiritual body of Christ* (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 12:27). Paul, speaking to the church at Colosse, said concerning God, “*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (Colossians 1:13). The Hebrew writer said, “*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly*

fear” (Hebrews 12:28). Now of *what kingdom* was he speaking? *The kingdom of God, the kingdom* which was from heaven, *the Lord’s church*, comprised of people the Lord saved and added to it, making them members of *His body, the spiritual body of Christ*, again being *the church* (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18).

Now after the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection, the record says concerning Christ, “*To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking things pertaining to the kingdom of God*” (Acts 1:3). In other words, Christ was giving final instructions to the apostles concerning *His kingdom* or *church*, which would shortly be established in Jerusalem. He went on to exhort, “*But ye shall receive the power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*” (Acts 1:8).

So in Acts 2 *that kingdom, the Lord’s church*, itself was established, with some 3,000 obeying God and being added to it (Acts 2:40). The gospel was preached again and again both in Jerusalem and in Judea, with thousands more obeying the Lord and being added to *that same church*.

But there is more. At this point, the record

