

THE CHURCH/KINGDOM'S IDENTIFYING MARKS (2)

By Keith Greer

The Owner. Kingdom: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." {John 18:36} If His kingdom was earthly, Jesus didn't know it. Church: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." {Matthew 16:18} According to Paul's letter to the church at Colossae, we are translated out of the kingdom of darkness and into Christ's kingdom {Colossians 1:13}. Christ is not the owner of two differing institutions, but only of ONE.

Ruler of the inhabitants. Kingdom: "Which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords." {1 Timothy 6:15} Christ is the ruler of His own kingdom. Church. "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." {Ephesians 5:23} Also, He is head over all things to the church – which is His body {Ephesians 1:22,23}.

The keys. Kingdom: "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} Keys unlock and open. God's word would be the keys that would open up the kingdom for mankind. Church: Jesus said these words to Peter when He told him He would build His church. Who preached the first gospel sermon to the Jews? Who preached it to the Gentiles? The answer to both questions is Peter {Acts 2, 10}. Peter preached the message of the cross to sinners to convict them to enter God's kingdom – His church.

Terms of entrance. Kingdom: "Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'" {John 3:5} Nicodemus was told that only by being "born again" of "water and the Spirit" could one enter the Lord's kingdom. Church: "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" {Acts 2:38} On the Day of Pentecost, when the church began, those seeking entrance had to do what Christ told Nicodemus to do – be born again. Being spiritually reborn requires truth and water. Those who obey the truth are baptized and added to the Lord's church; at the same time, they become part of His kingdom!

The memorial supper. Kingdom: "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." {Matthew 26:29} Church: "What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you." {1 Corinthians 11:22} Christians partake of the Lord's Supper when the church is assembled. When we partake, we commune with our Lord. Where did Jesus say He would commune with us? In His Father's KINGDOM!

Other identifying marks could be given, but these give serious reasons why we understand that the **KINGDOM** and the **CHURCH** are one in the same – not two differing

institutions. Why won't people open their hearts and accept these truths? The Jews spoken of in the New Testament had the same problem – they were looking for an earthly, fleshly kingdom. God nor the prophets ever pointed to an earthly physical kingdom on earth. Thanks be to God, we are part of His church and, therefore, members of His kingdom – period! ***