

There are a few basic, essential elements which we would expect to find in any "Kingdom." For instance, there must be a **King**, a **Territory**, a **Law**, and a **Citizenship**. We expect to find no less in the "Kingdom of God." However, Jesus said His Kingdom is "not of this world." He said, "My kingdom is not of this realm" (John 18:36). In a physical kingdom, we expect to find a visible king sitting on a literal throne reigning over a territory made of rocks and dirt. But what about a spiritual kingdom? Will we find a King, a Territory, a Law, and a Citizenship in the Kingdom of God? The scriptures say "Yes." Let's take a look at the scriptural evidence.

1. Jesus is the King of God's Kingdom. Even before His birth, His mother was told that He would be a king (Luke 1:32-33). Just before His death, Pontius Pilate asked about His kingship. Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king" (John 18:37). In Matthew's account of this conversation, Pilate asked, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And Jesus said to him, "It is as you say" (Matthew 27:11). In Matthew 26:63 we find the high priest also asking Him if He is the Christ; to which Jesus replied, "You have said it yourself" (vs 64). Because He did not deny His identity as Christ and King, Jesus was sentenced to death. Nevertheless, after He was resurrected and had ascended to heaven, His disciples defended His spiritual reign. The apostles boldly preached that God had raised Him up and that Jesus had been "exalted to the right hand of God" and that He had "received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:33). Paul wrote that God had seated the Christ at His own right hand in the heavenly places, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and *above* every name that is named . . ." (Ephesians 1:20-21). Jesus put it very simply. He said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). Jesus is the King of God's Kingdom.

2. The Heart of Man is the Territory of God's Kingdom. One day, the Pharisees were questioning Jesus about the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21 NIV). In this verse, the word rendered "within" is the Greek word entos. According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, this word means: "within; inside; within . . . your soul." The translators of the King James Version, the New King James Version, the American Standard Version, the New International Version, and others render this passage the same: "the kingdom of God is within you." You see, when Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God, He said that God's word is the seed of the Kingdom (Luke 8:10-12). He said that when that word is planted in a good and honest heart, much fruit will be produced (vs 15). The Territory of God's Kingdom is the Heart of Man. Anywhere a heart is found where Jesus is allowed to reign as King -- the Kingdom of God exists within that heart.

3. The Word of Christ is the Law in God's Kingdom. This is what we would expect in a true monarchy -- the word of the King is law. Judicial matters are settled by the provisions of the law. Jesus said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day" (John 12:48). The word of Christ is the law in God's kingdom. Just because a person refers to Jesus as Lord and Christ does not make that person a part of the Kingdom. This king demands obedience to God's word. In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."

4. Christians are the Citizens of God's Kingdom. When Paul wrote to the Christians who lived in Philippi, he said, "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). The kingdom of which we are citizens is "The Kingdom of Heaven." The apostle Peter said that we are aliens and strangers in this physical world (I Peter 2:11). We sing a song with this same sentiment. It says:

"This world is not my home, I'm just a passing thro',
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue;
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore."

Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt 6:19-21). Our citizenship is in heaven and so is our King, reigning at the right hand of God. Our heart is in heaven too, for it is the territory of our Heavenly King.

Perhaps we are beginning to see how the New Testament develops the idea of a "spiritual kingdom." In our next "Bible Talk," # 306, we shall explore this idea further. We shall look at some of the Teachings about the Kingdom of God in the pages of the New Testament.



Bible Probe

FOUR ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A KINGDOM

1. Name four basic, essential elements we would expect to find in any Kingdom:

2. How does each of these scriptures help to show that Jesus is the King of God's Kingdom?

Luke 1:32-33 _____

John 18:37 _____

Matthew 27:11 _____

Matthew 26:63-64 _____

Acts 2:33 _____

Ephesians 1:20-21 _____

Matthew 28:18 _____

3. From Luke 17:20-21 and Luke 8:10-15, over what territory does Christ reign?

Explain your answer:

4. What is the "Law" in the Kingdom of Christ? (John 12:48)

5. What did Jesus teach in Matthew 7:21 about entering the Kingdom of Heaven?

6. Where does the Christian have his citizenship? (Philippians 3:20)

7. How does the statement of Jesus in Matthew 6:19-20 explain I Peter 2:11?