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Acts 1:1-12

7

all the creation. But one part of this creation rebelled. Man turned against God, and man tried to escape from the kingdom of God. He can't escape. The very breath a man uses when he dares God, he is able to use only because God permits it. He can't escape it.

But there is another sense of the kingdom of God, which is the sense of those who willingly and with full intent try to obey God and keep His commandments. Those who are members of His kingdom because they are looking to Him for leadership and are trying to follow His commandments. Of course in this sense Israel was very definitely a kingdom of God in ancient times but as Paul says in Rom. 9:6 they are not all of Israel who are so called. The true Israelite was the one who truly sought to carry out the commands of God. So there is a kingdom of God which consists of those individuals who are truly trying to follow God and considering themselves as members of His kingdom.

This doubtless is what Jesus had in mind when He said in Lk. 17:21 that "Behold the kingdom of God is within you." That word may mean it is within, it may mean among. There's considerable argument as to which it means, but both are true. Jesus and His disciples represented the kingdom of God as they moved among the people. The kingdom of God was made up of those who were truly trying to do the will of God. But the kingdom of God is within us too in the sense that the important thing is not our external appearance but our relation to God. It is a matter of the heart. Some carry this to the point where they try to make the kingdom entirely related to people during this age endeavoring to follow the Lord, and that that alone is the kingdom of God! There are those who say the OT promises of a kingdom for Israel, the kingdom in which Messiah will rule from Mt. Zion, and when He will rule the kingdoms of the nations with a rod of iron, that all of these must be raised to a higher level and that they are all descriptions of the Christian church in showing, to be fulfilled in the activity of the Christian church.

Now the Christian church, that is those who are true believers are indeed the kingdom of God in a very special way. But there is this other sense as it is taught in the OT that there is to be an actual physical kingdom upon this earth when the Lord comes back.

Now we read in Acts 1:3 that He talked to them for 40 days about the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Let us imagine for a moment that during that time He explained to them that the kingdom is not to be an earthly thing. It's to be your relation to God. It's to be as you spread through the world and give the Gospel. All this is true. But if He explained to them this is what all the OT prophecies of the kingdom of God mean, there is never to be any earthly kingdom or ruler on Mt. Zion, nothing like that -- if He had explained that during the 40 days, what do you think that He would have thought when they asked him, "Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Now imagine that you or I had been during 40 days telling them there is not going to be any physical kingdom, any earthly kingdom.

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