

WEEK 3

The Kingdom and the Church

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:18-19; 18:15-22; Rom. 14:17; Rev. 1:6; Col. 1:12-13

OUTLINE

<< DAY 1 >>

- I. The Bible first presents the kingdom and thereafter presents the church; the presence of the kingdom produces the church (Matt. 4:23; 16:18-19):
 - A. The life of God is the kingdom of God; the divine life is the kingdom, and this life produces the church (John 3:3, 5; Matt. 7:14, 21; 19:17, 29; 25:46):
 1. The kingdom is the realm of life for life to move, rule, and govern so that life may accomplish its purpose, and this realm is the kingdom.
 2. The gospel brings in the divine life, and this life has its realm, which is the kingdom; the divine life with its realm produces the church (2 Tim. 1:10).
 3. The gospel of the kingdom brings forth the church because the kingdom is the life itself, and the church is the issue of life (Matt. 4:23; Acts 8:12).
 - B. The kingdom is the reality of the church; therefore, apart from the kingdom life, we cannot live the church life (Matt. 5:3; 16:18-19; Rev. 1:4-6, 9):
 1. The reality of the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 5—7) is the content of the church life; without the reality of the kingdom, the church is empty.
 2. Since the kingdom life issues in the church life, as we live corporately in the kingdom life, we spontaneously live the church life (Rom. 14:17).

<< DAY 2 >>

3. A believer who does not live in the reality of the kingdom cannot be built into the structure of the church (Eph. 2:22).
- C. Without the kingdom as the reality of the church, the church cannot be built up (Matt. 16:18-19):
 1. The church is brought into being through the authority of the kingdom.
 2. The keys of the kingdom are given to make the building of the church possible (v. 19; 18:18; cf. John 20:23).
 3. When the kingdom of the heavens is able to assert its authority over a company of

believers, those believers can be built up into the church (Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15-16).

- D. The purpose of the vital groups in the church life is to live the kingdom life—the God-man life; a vital group is a real representation of the church (Matt. 18:15-22).

« DAY 3 »

II. The genuine church is the kingdom of God in this age; today the believers live the kingdom life in the church (16:18-19; 18:17-18; 13:44-46; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; Eph. 2:19; Col. 4:11; Rev. 1:4-6):

A. Each time the Lord Jesus spoke of the church, He mentioned it in relation to the kingdom; this indicates how intimately the kingdom and the church are related (Matt. 16:18-19; 18:17-18):

1. Romans 14:17 proves that the church in this age is the kingdom of God.
2. The kingdom of God in 1 Corinthians 4:20 refers to the church life (v. 17), implying that in the sense of authority, the church in this age is the kingdom of God.
3. The term fellow citizens in Ephesians 2:19 indicates the kingdom of God, the sphere wherein God exercises His authority.

B. The word kingdom in Revelation 1:6 reveals that where the church is, there the kingdom of God is; the church represents the kingdom.

C. In the church as the kingdom, we are under rule, government, discipline, and exercise (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5).

D. In the Lord's recovery, at the same time we are both in the kingdom and in the church, in the treasure and in the pearl (Matt. 13:44-46).

E. Although the church today is God's kingdom, we are in the kingdom in reality only when we live, walk, and have our being in the spirit, not in our natural man (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25).

« DAY 4 »

III. The Father has delivered us out of the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:12-13):

A. The kingdom of the Son of God's love comprises three ages: the present age, in which the church is; the coming age, in which the millennial kingdom will be; and the eternal age with the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth (v. 13):

1. The stress in Colossians 1:13 is the kingdom of the Son of God's love in this age, which is the reality of the church.
2. The church life today is the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love, which is as delightful to God the Father as the Son of God is (4:15-16).

« DAY 5 »

B. We need to understand the intrinsic significance of the church as the kingdom of the Son of God's love (1:13):

1. The Son of God is the embodiment and expression of the divine life; hence, the kingdom of the Son is a realm of life (1 John 5:11-12; John 1:4).
2. The kingdom into which we have been transferred is the kingdom of the Son of God's love; this realm of life is in love, not in fear (Col. 1:13).
3. The kingdom in which we find ourselves today is a realm full of life, light, and love (1 Pet. 2:9).
4. The Son of the Father is the expression of the Father as the source of life (John 1:18, 4; 1 John 1:2):
 - a. The Son of the Father's love is the object of the Father's love to be the embodiment of life to us in the divine love with the authority in resurrection (Matt. 3:17).
 - b. The Son, as the embodiment of the divine life, is the object of the Father's love (17:5):
 - (1) The divine life embodied in the Son is given to us in the divine love (1 John 5:11-12; John 3:16).
 - (2) The object of the divine love becomes to us the embodiment of life in the divine love with the authority in resurrection; this is the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love.

« DAY 6 »

5. To be transferred into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love is to be transferred into the Son, who is life to us (1 John 5:11-12):

- a. The Son in resurrection is now the life-giving Spirit, and He rules us in His resurrection life with love (1 Pet. 1:3; Rom. 6:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:45b).
- b. When we live by the Son as our life in resurrection, we are living in His kingdom, enjoying Him in the Father's love; here we have the church life (Col. 3:4; John 6:57).
- c. Because the Father delights in His Son, the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love is a pleasant thing, a matter of delight (Matt. 3:17; 17:5).

C. In the church as the kingdom of the Son of God's love, we have the reality and practicality of the organic Body of Christ (Col. 2:19).

D. In the church as the kingdom of the Son of God's love, we have the reality and practicality of the universal one new man (Eph. 2:15; 4:24; Col. 3:10-11).

<< WEEK 3 — DAY 1 >>

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 4:23 And Jesus went about in all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom...

7:14 Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

Although the church and the kingdom are interrelated, there is nonetheless a difference between them. Because any kind of life is a kingdom, the kingdom is the life itself....The life of God is the kingdom of God. The church, however, is not the life, nor is the life the church. Rather, the church is the product of life. The divine life is the kingdom, and this life produces the church.

The New Testament concept is that the gospel brings in the kingdom....The gospel brings in the kingdom of God, and the gospel also brings forth the church of God. For this reason, in the New Testament the gospel is called the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14). But there is not a verse telling us that the gospel is the gospel of the church. The gospel of the kingdom brings forth the church because the kingdom is the life itself, and the church is the issue of life. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 1740)

Today's Reading

In the first preaching of the New Testament gospel people were told to repent because the kingdom of the heavens had drawn near (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). This meant that the time had come for God to dispense Himself as life into people. The gospel brings God as life, and this life is the kingdom. The kingdom is the realm of life for life to move, work, rule, and govern so that life may accomplish its purpose. The kingdom as the realm of life is actually the life itself. The gospel brings in the divine life, and the divine life has its realm. This is the kingdom. The divine life with its realm produces the church.

Because the kingdom is the reality of the church, according to the New Testament revelation, we cannot live the church life apart from the proper kingdom life....To enter the kingdom of God is to be regenerated. We may talk about regeneration without realizing that regeneration is for the entry into the kingdom....Regeneration results in the kingdom, for regeneration issues in an entrance into the kingdom. When God regenerated us, He regenerated us into His kingdom.

We need to be deeply impressed with the fact that the reality of the kingdom of the heavens is the content of the church life. This means that without the reality of the kingdom, the church is empty. The reality of the kingdom is actually Christ Himself as our life. Christ as life is the essence, the substance, for us to live a proper life so that in this life we may be built up with other believers to bring in the real church life, which is a glorious expression of Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God. Because Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God, when Christ is expressed, the entire Triune God is expressed. This expression depends on whether or not the believers live a life that is the reality of the kingdom, a reality that is fully revealed and described in chapters 5 through 7 of the Gospel of Matthew. These chapters are a complete message on the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens, and this constitution is the reality of the kingdom life. This reality is the genuine content of the church life.

If we would have the reality of the kingdom as the content of our church life, we need Christ to be our life and our life supply. Through the dispensing of the Triune God into our being, we need to experience and enjoy Christ as our life.

Today we have the processed Triune God with Christ as the embodiment and the Spirit as the consummation. Day by day we need to open to Him, call on Him, stay in His presence, fellowship with Him, and allow Him to work within us to dispense all that He is, all that He has, all that He has done, and all that He is doing into our being. As the spontaneous issue of this dispensing, we shall have the kingdom life, and this kingdom life will be our church life. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 1740-1742, 1746)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 160

« WEEK 3 – DAY 2 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 16:18-19 ...Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in the heavens.

When the Lord said, “Upon this rock I will build My church,” He immediately added, “I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens” [Matt. 16:18-19]. The keys of the kingdom are given to make the building of the church possible. Where the authority of the kingdom is absent, there the building of the church will be lacking. Anyone who refuses to submit to the authority of the kingdom can at best be a saved person; he will never be built into the structure of the church. (CWWL, 1957, vol. 3, “The Kingdom and the Church,” pp. 261-262)

Today’s Reading

Where the kingdom of the heavens is in authority, there a church will be built up. A church comes into being where a company of people accept the government of heaven.

The Scriptures present [a] profound aspect—that the church has been secured through the sovereign rule of heaven. Because the kingdom of heaven is able to assert its authority over a company of men, that company of men can be built up into a church....How was the church brought into being? It was by means of the authority of the kingdom. God’s purpose was to bring His heavenly dominion to the earth, and apart from the church His goal could not be attained. He needed a people who would subject themselves to the dominion of heaven so that under that dominion they might be built up into the church.

If there is to be a building, the one indispensable condition is submission to the authority of the kingdom. Our Savior has been exalted to be Head of the universe, and all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. God has put all things under His feet and has made Him Head over all things to the church. In the first place this implies that the church must come under His headship. What is headship? It is the government of the Head. We need to realize that in order for the church to be built up, we must submit to the authority of the Head. Where there is no Head, there is no authority, and there the question of church building cannot even arise. In Ephesians 4:15-16, which speaks throughout of the building of the church, it is shown to be of primary importance that we “grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ.” In how many things are we really growing up into Him? Even our humility, even our love, and even many of our other good qualities are not necessarily a growing up under His headship. We have not yet understood what it means to have our affections governed by Christ and to have all those other desirable qualities developed under His headship. Where there is truly a growing up in all things into the Head, there will follow the building up of the Body as these two verses show. “All the Body, being joined together and being knit together...causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.” Colossians 2:19 speaks of “holding the Head.” What does that mean? It means that in all things we submit to the authority of the Head. Note that it does not say, “Holding the Savior,” nor does it say, “Holding the life.” It is when we submit to the government of the Head that there will be the building of which the same verse speaks—“All the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.” If we have subjection to the authority of the Head, we have the building up of the Body. Where the government of heaven is secured, there the church is secured. The extent to which the church is built up in our midst will depend entirely upon the place given in our midst to the church’s Head. (CWWL, 1957, vol. 3, “The Kingdom and the Church,” pp. 262-263, 265-266)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1957, vol. 3, “The Kingdom and the Church,” chs. 7-9; CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, “The Vital Groups,” ch. 1; Life-study of Matthew, msgs. 47, 51

« WEEK 3 – DAY 3 »

Morning Nourishment

Eph. 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints...

Rom. 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19 affords us the basis for saying that the church today is God's kingdom. The citizens mentioned here are related to a kingdom, a nation, not to a family. A family is composed of members, not of citizens....We are members of God's household;...we are [also] citizens of God's nation, of God's kingdom.

Although the church today is God's kingdom, we are in the kingdom in reality only when we live and walk in spirit. Whenever we behave according to the old man or live in the flesh or the self, we, in a practical way, are out of God's kingdom. This means that when we are in the flesh, we are in the old realm of the fallen human nature, which has been fully usurped by Satan to form his kingdom. Therefore, a genuine Christian, if he lives in the flesh instead of in the spirit, may live in a practical way not in the kingdom of God but in the kingdom of Satan. Only when we live, walk, behave, and have our being altogether in our spirit, not in our natural man, are we in the kingdom of God and, in reality, are the kingdom of God. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 2236)

Today's Reading

The kingdom of God is the living of the church. A verse that strongly proves this is Romans 14:17....According to some Bible teachers, the kingdom has not yet come. They claim that now is the dispensation of the church, and the next dispensation will be that of the kingdom. But in 14:17 Paul does not say that the kingdom of God shall be; he uses the present tense and says that the kingdom of God is. According to the context of Romans 14, which speaks of receiving the believers, the kingdom is today's church life. The reality of the church life is the kingdom. Romans 12 speaks of the Body life, and Romans 14, of the kingdom life. This indicates that, in Romans, the kingdom life is the reality of the Body life.

In a sense, it is correct to say that the present age is the church age and that the coming age will be the kingdom age. However, in another sense, the kingdom of God is here today, for the kingdom is the reality of the church and the living of the church. Hence, the church is the kingdom.

The proper church life is the kingdom life. If we live under the rule of the living God within us, that is, under the rule of the kingdom of the heavens, we shall have the kind of life recorded in chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew. We shall also have a life of the kingdom practiced in the church life. Hence, we should not separate the kingdom of God from the church.

In Romans 14:17 we see that the kingdom of God as the living of the church is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. When the authority of God's kingdom operates in us, righteousness, peace, and joy will characterize our daily life.

Righteousness, peace, and joy are actually the expression of Christ. When Christ is expressed, He is our righteousness toward ourselves, our peace toward others, and our joy with God.

As the believers live the kingdom life in the church, they will live righteously toward themselves. This means that we must be strict with ourselves and make no excuses for ourselves.

To live the kingdom life in the church also means that we live peacefully toward others....Toward others we must endeavor to pursue peace, continually seeking to be at peace with them. This peace is Christ Himself lived out from our being.

Living the kingdom life in the church also requires that we live joyfully to God in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of joy. If we are not joyful, this indicates that we are not in the Holy Spirit. If we are truly living the kingdom life, we shall be joyful with God, praising Him. Whenever we live righteously toward ourselves and peacefully toward others, we shall live joyfully to God in the Holy Spirit. Such a living is the kingdom of God as the living of the church. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 2237-2239)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msgs. 209, 241-242, 252

« WEEK 3 — DAY 4 »

Morning Nourishment

Col. 1:12-13 Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light; who delivered us out of the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

The kingdom of the Son of God's love comprises three ages: the present age, in which the church is; the coming age, in which the millennial kingdom will be; and the eternal age with the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and the new earth. These three aspects of the kingdom are considered by Paul in Colossians 1:13 as the kingdom of the Son of God's love.

The words the Son of God are a delight to the Father's ears. When the Lord Jesus was baptized, the Father declared, "This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight" (Matt. 3:17). When the Lord was transfigured, the Father made the same declaration (Matt. 17:5). Because the Father delights in His Son, the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love is a pleasant thing, a matter of delight. This is the reason it comprises only three sections—the section of the church life, the section of the heavenly part of the kingdom of the heavens in the millennium, and the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem as the consummation of the church and the kingdom. In each of these three sections the kingdom of the Son of God's love is a matter of delight. The Father, by His mercy and grace, has transferred us out of the darkness of Satan into this pleasant part of the kingdom. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 2583)

Today's Reading

The stress in Colossians 1:13 is the kingdom of the Son of God's love in this age, which is the reality of the church. The church life today is the kingdom of the Son of God's love, which is as delightful to God the Father as the Son of God is. We, the believers, all have been transferred into this delightful kingdom of the Son of God's love. God the Father loves the delightful part of the kingdom, just as He loves His delightful Son as His own. So, the church, as the delightful part of the divine kingdom, is considered a great blessing to God's redeemed people by the apostle Paul in the book of Colossians, a book which is on Christ as the all-inclusive portion of God's people (Col. 1:12).

John 3:5 indicates that it is through regeneration that all the believers have been transferred into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. Through regeneration we have been brought out of the darkness of Satan into this delightful aspect of the kingdom. God loved the Son, so He gave this part of the kingdom to Him. Through God's salvation and regeneration, all the believers of His Son have been transferred into this section of the kingdom. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 2583-2584)

We may still be under the authority of darkness in our married life. When a brother is exchanging words with his wife, both he and his wife are in darkness. Because they are in darkness, they accuse and blame each other. The same is true when there are arguments between brothers or between sisters. Our experience testifies that whenever we live, walk, and behave in the self, we are in darkness. There is no need to commit some gross sin in order to be in darkness. Simply living according to the self puts us in darkness, for it causes us to be separated from Christ.

Whenever we are in the natural man, not taking Christ as our person and living by Him, we are in darkness. We must remember that He alone is light. He must saturate and prevail in every aspect of our daily living. Otherwise, at least certain parts of our daily walk will not be filled with Christ.

Those parts of our life and living that are closed off from Christ are spontaneously in darkness because Christ, the One who is the very light, has no place. Only when Christ occupies every part of us and every aspect of our daily walk can we be wholly in the light and altogether be delivered from the control of the authority of darkness. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 40-41)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 244

« WEEK 3 – DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

1 Pet. 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

According to the New Testament, the Son of God is the expression of the divine life and its embodiment. This means that the kingdom of the Son is a realm of life. The fact that the kingdom into which we have been transferred is the kingdom of the Son of God's love indicates that this realm of life is in love, not in fear. The kingdom in which we find ourselves today is a realm full of life, light, and love. (Life-study of Colossians, p. 38)

Today's Reading

The Son of the Father is the expression of the Father as the source of life (John 1:18, 4; 1 John 1:2). The Father as the source of life is expressed in the Son.

The Son of the Father's love is the object of the Father's love to be the embodiment of life to us in the divine love with the authority in resurrection. The Son, as the embodiment of the divine life, is the object of the Father's love. The divine life embodied in the Son is given to us in the divine love. Therefore, the object of the divine love becomes to us the embodiment of life in the divine love with the authority in resurrection. This is the kingdom of the Son of His love.

It is easier to give an illustration of the kingdom of the Son of His love than it is to give an adequate definition of it. Consider your experience. Coming to realize that the Lord Jesus is so loving and lovable, we began to love Him. As we love the Lord Jesus, we are conscious of a sweet sense of love. Not only does this sense of love include the Lord Jesus, but it also includes us. We realize that we also are the objects of the divine love. As objects of this divine love, we spontaneously come under a certain control or ruling. Before we began to love the Lord Jesus, we were free to do whatever we wanted. But the more we say, "Lord Jesus, I love You," the less freedom we have. Before we began to love the Lord Jesus, we did not sense this ruling or restriction. We could mistreat people or engage in worldly entertainments without any sense of inward restriction. But as those who love the Lord Jesus, we have come under His rule. This rule is not harsh; on the contrary, it is sweet and pleasant. Oh, we are restricted and ruled in such a sweet way! Because of the pleasantness of the Lord's rule in us, we do not care even to speak a vain word or to have a thought that is displeasing to Him. We are ruled and restricted to the uttermost in the sweetness of love. This is the kingdom of the Son of His love.

The more we are willing to be restricted and ruled by the Lord Jesus out of our love for Him, the more we shall grow in life, even in the abundance of life. This indicates that the kingdom of the Son of His love is for our enjoyment of Christ as life. Here we are freed from everything other than Christ, not only from evil things, but also from things such as philosophy, ordinances, observances, and asceticism. When we were holding to our philosophy, ethics, asceticism, and ordinances, we were under the authority of darkness. But God has delivered us out of this authority and has transferred us into a kingdom of love that is full of life and light. Here we have no observances, rituals, ordinances, practices, philosophies, mysticism, Gnosticism, or asceticism. We just have Christ, the Son of His love. Here we have love, light, and life. This is to live by Christ.

To live by Christ means that we do not live by anything other than Christ. If we see what it is to live by Christ, we shall realize that many of us are still under some form of control established by the self, a control set up and carried out by the self. This kind of control is the authority of darkness. If we are under this authority, we receive no light in reading the Bible, and we have no utterance in prayer. Although the Father has delivered us out of the authority of darkness, out of our natural thought, emotion, preference, and behavior, we may still remain in some aspect of our natural being. This causes us to be held under the authority of darkness. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 32-33)

Further Reading: Life-study of Colossians, msg. 5

« WEEK 3 – DAY 6 »

Morning Nourishment

1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.

Col. 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

To be transferred into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love is to be transferred into the Son who is life to us (1 John 5:12). The Son in resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3; Rom. 6:4-5) is now the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). He rules us in His resurrection life with love. This is the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love. When we live by the Son as our life in resurrection, we are living in His kingdom, enjoying Him in the Father's love.

We have been transferred into a realm where we are ruled in love with life. Here, under the heavenly ruling and restriction, we have genuine freedom, the proper freedom in love, with life, and under light. This is what it means to be delivered out of the authority of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Here in this kingdom we enjoy Christ and have the church life. Here there is no opinion or division. Here we have one thing: the church life with Christ as everything to us. This is the revelation of the book of Colossians. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 34-35)

Today's Reading

In Colossians the authority of darkness [1:13] refers to the good aspects of culture and of our character, disposition, and natural being. The authority of darkness includes our virtues, religion, philosophy, observances, ordinances, principles, and ethical standards. God has delivered us out of all this and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, where we live under a heavenly rule and restriction. In this kingdom we are not under a harsh rule, but under the loving rule of the Son. Here we do not sense that we are under righteousness, power, or authority, but under the loving and lovable Lord Jesus. The more we tell the Lord Jesus that we love Him, the more we are freed on the one hand, and the more we are restricted and ruled on the other hand. Because we love Him, we desire to take Him as our person and as our life. This is the proper Christian life for the church life.

The mistake the Colossians were making was that of receiving and following something other than Christ. To accept something in place of Christ is not only to be in darkness, but also to be under the controlling authority of darkness. Anything that is a substitute for Christ—philosophy, religion, character, virtues, concepts, opinions—becomes the authority of darkness to control us. At Colossae, the authority of darkness was Jewish religious observances, pagan ordinances, philosophy, mysticism, and asceticism. Although these things seemed to be good, they were actually the authority of darkness because they replaced Christ. They caused Christ, the light, to be set aside. Therefore, darkness became prevailing once again and controlled the saints in the church. This was the situation in Colossae, and may also be the situation today.

Many believers insist that the Bible is full of light. This, of course, is true. But if we do not read the Word in the Lord's presence, even our reading of the Scriptures will be in darkness. We shall be like the Pharisees addressed by the Lord Jesus in John 5:39 and 40: "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me. Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." It is possible to have the Bible in our hand and yet still be blind and in darkness. The religionists were offended when Christ told them they were blind (John 9:39-41). They thought they were in light because they had the Scriptures in an outward way. But actually they were blind because they did not have Christ, who alone is the light of the world. Any place where the Lord Jesus is not present is under the authority of darkness.

For Christ to be the Head of the Body, and for us, His believers, to be the members of His Body, He needed to deliver us out of the authority of darkness, the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:26), and transfer us into the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of God's Beloved. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 35, 41, 39-40, 24)

Further Reading: Life-study of Colossians, msgs. 3-4

<< WEEK 3 — HYMN >>

Hymns, #942

1 God's kingdom on the earth is now

His sov'reign government within;

'Tis Christ Himself in us to live

As Lord and King to rule and reign.

2 His life with His authority

Enthrones Him now within our hearts

To govern all our words and deeds

And regulate our inward parts.

3 The Lord enthroned within our hearts

His kingdom doth establish there,

Assuring His full right to reign

And for God's purpose to prepare.

4 'Tis by His reign within our hearts

That life to us He e'er supplies;

When taking Him as Lord and King,

His wealth our being satisfies.

5 'Tis by His ruling from within

His fullness vast is testified;

'Tis when His inner kingdom rules,

His Body's blessed and edified.

6 'Tis by His heav'nly rule within

As heav'nly citizens we live;

'Tis by submission to His rule,

Expression of His reign we give.

7 Here in this heav'nly realm we live,

And with this heav'nly pow'r possessed

We walk and fight in heav'nly light

Until the kingdom's manifest.