

# THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

## THE DISTINCTIVE NATURE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST -AS TO GOVERNMENT A KINGDOM-

It is entirely possible to speak of one man in various offices yet still refer to the same man. Consider for example a man (Bob) who is a white man, a democrat, and a school teacher: is married with two children, and whose hobby is fishing. If speaking of Bob in relation to his work one would call him "teacher," but if referring to him based on his political status one would thus call him a "democrat." He is referring to the same person yet in two different ways. Both are accurate and correct and both refer to one person. Again, if one refers to Bob in view of his race he would call him a "white man," but if considering him in relation to his family he might call him "husband" or "father," and if noting Bob for his hobby he would refer to him as a "fisherman." Here again he has used different designations accurately and has portrayed properly the same man, but using various terms.

Likewise, might one contemplate the church in much the same fashion. A man may take note of the church from various perspectives and refer to it by distinct names or designations based on particular characteristics, and yet still be referring to the church. In our last study we considered the church as just that, the church. We observed that the *church of Christ* is not the name of the church, but simply a designation emphasizing the relation of Christians to the world, i.e., called out of it. Another designation of the called out body of baptized believers, the church, is the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God.

### ***Jesus Christ—King Over His Kingdom Now!***

That Jesus Christ is now a king is evident from the inspired Scriptures. Paul identified Jesus as "*King of kings and Lord of Lords*" (I Timothy 6:15); Jesus himself stated that He was born to be king (John 18:37); Peter declared that HE ascended into heaven and was crowned king (Acts 2:33,36; cf. Daniel 7:13-14); Jesus was the antitype of Melchizedek who was both king and priest (Genesis 14; Hebrews 7). Since Jesus is even now reigning as a king He must of necessity have a kingdom over which He rules! This kingdom is His church (Matthew 16:18-19). This being true the nature of the church in relation to its government is clearly in its designation as the kingdom of heaven.

### ***The Church of Christ—As to Government a Kingdom***

In order properly to serve God in the church of Christ, one must understand the nature of the church in relation to its government. The Old Testament abounds in prophecy concerning the Messiah and His mission on earth. Many of these prophecies speak directly to the fact that Jesus, the prophesied Messiah (John 1:41), was to establish a kingdom. Of the Messiah and His kingdom Isaiah wrote, "*Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this*" (Isaiah 9:7; cf. Luke 1:31-33). Daniel declared that in the days of the Roman kings "...will the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed..." (Daniel 2:44; cf. Colossians 1:12; Hebrews 12:28). Nathan, God's spokesman in the days of King David prophesied that one of David's descendants would "*build an house*" for Jehovah's name, and that God would, "*stablish the throne of his kingdom forever*" (II Samuel 7:13).

### ***Enduring Character and Spiritual Nature of the Kingdom***

Worthy to note in this is the enduring nature of this kingdom. Daniel affirmed that, unlike the kingdoms of men which are conquered and ultimately dissolve into other kingdoms, the kingdom of heaven will never be left to other nations, but "*shall never*

**THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES** AM

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

- I. The \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. \_\_\_\_\_)
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. \_\_\_\_\_?
- II. The \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. \_\_\_\_\_)
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_ Christ
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_ Christ
- III. The \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. \_\_\_\_\_)
  - A. There can be a \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. There can be a \_\_\_\_\_

**GOD DEMANDS STRUCTURE** PM

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

- I. God Demands \_\_\_\_\_ Structure
  - A. The \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. The \_\_\_\_\_
- II. God Demands \_\_\_\_\_ Structure
  - A. Properly Organized \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Properly Organized \_\_\_\_\_
- III. God Demands \_\_\_\_\_ Structure
  - A. It \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. It \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_
- IV. God Demands \_\_\_\_\_ Structure
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_
- V. God Demands \_\_\_\_\_ Structure
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_ God's \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_ God's \_\_\_\_\_

*be destroyed*” (Daniel 2:44). Isaiah and Luke declare that the kingdom of heaven will be endless (Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:33) and the Hebrews writer affirms that Christ’s kingdom is an “immovable” kingdom (Hebrews 12:28). Not only does this indicate the spiritual nature of the kingdom, but it also informs us that God is the one who has established the kingdom and that Deity, not man, has the rule over the kingdom.

Furthermore, the gospel writers emphasize the spiritual nature of this kingdom making reference to it as the “kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33; Mark 1:15; Luke 7:28; John 3:5; et al). Matthew alone reveals to us not only the spiritual nature of the kingdom but also the boundaries of it as he calls it the “kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 13; 16:19; 18:1-4; et al).

***Authority in the Kingdom—Monarchy vs. Democracy***

The church of Christ, the kingdom of heaven and of God is an absolute monarchy. Christ is the monarch, the King of kings and He, therefore, has absolute authority. Jesus our King declared this, “...*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*” (Matthew 28:18). Paul by inspiration wrote of this “...*the God of our Lord Jesus Christ...hath put all things under his (Jesus’) feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church...*” (Ephesians 1:17-23).

The Israelites knew all too well the rule of an absolute monarch, and they understood their place in the kingdom as citizens. Today, we live in a democratic society. Because of this many have perverted the government of Christ’s kingdom from His monarchical rule to their democratic desire. This distinct characteristic of the kingdom of Christ, or the church of Christ, stands as a clear identifying mark to those who are seeking the true New Testament church; for the manmade religious bodies of today are characterized, not by the absolute reign of Christ over them, but by the democratic style of government established by men.

In a monarchy there is no voting among the congregation to determine the rightness or wrongness of a thing. In a monarchy there is no gathering of a council or yearly convention, nor of a board to determine the “direction” which the church must take to survive in the future. In a monarchy there is no writing and rewriting of a creed, but only the submission to the all authoritative king and to his words. These democratic characteristics are traits of the denominations around us, not of the kingdom of Christ and they stand forever as contrasts and distinguishing marks used to separate for us the true kingdom from ecclesiastical sectarian bodies of men. The church is a kingdom. Christ is its King. May we always strive to submit to the rule of Him who is over us!

*-Ronnie Scherffius*

## **THE BOOK OF LAW**

The book of Leviticus is one that is either misapplied or ignored by many students of the Bible today. In a survey of the Bible it may be given little attention, and when viewing God's scheme of redemption through the Bible, it certainly is overlooked without hesitation. However, it, like every other book of the Bible, is richly filled with important truths, practical applications, powerful teachings, and Messianic hope.

Leviticus derives its name from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which named it thus because of its connection with the services of sacrifice and worship administered by the Levitical priesthood. However, its Hebrew title came from the first few words of the text, "*And the Lord called.*" This giving evidence to its relationship in continuation of the book of Exodus, the second inspired book of Moses. The account focuses on Jehovah's commands regarding worship and Israel's everyday activities regarding morality, secular and social expectations, feast days, and even hygiene. And not surprisingly, the laws given by God unto the people regarding sanitation and also food preparation have stood the test of time, being standards for such even today.

As with the first two of the five books penned by Moses, this record dates back to the closing years of the wilderness wanderings of Israel in and around the Sinai peninsula sometime shortly before 1400 B.C. Mosaic authorship is without question in the minds of true Bible scholars, and is only questioned by the highly educated (i.e., clinically insane) who hold to a more scientific form of penmanship which altogether in its very theory questions and blatantly rejects the verbal inspiration of the Bible (II Timothy 3:16). However, as mentioned above its obvious continuation from Exodus, which was an obvious continuation of Genesis, gives adequate proof, among further, that Moses is without doubt or reservation the inspired writer of this text.

The account of Leviticus begins wherein Exodus concluded at the completion of the tabernacle which had been preceded in the giving of the law by the appointment of the Levitical priesthood and means in which they were to dress and conduct themselves. With this background, Moses then continues these inspired instructions telling the people how then the tabernacle and the priesthood is to be used including animal sacrifices and feast days, among which was the annual Day of Atonement, the day in which the sins of the people were ceremonially expelled from the camp of the nation until the next year. Moses wrote "to show Israel how to live as a priestly kingdom and a holy nation in fellowship with God" (Wilkinson and Boa). It is this connection to the history thus far recorded that helps the student realize the true purpose of Leviticus. In Genesis sin entered the world along with the hope of the coming Messiah, and it was based on this hope that a promise was made to Abraham that all families of the earth would be blessed through his seed. Genesis then closes and Exodus opens with that seed in Egyptian bondage under the rule of a ruthless Pharaoh and subject to toilsome taskmasters. But the nation was redeemed from bondage through Jehovah's mighty hand of protection and the people were led out of Egypt and toward the land of promise where they would live and function together in anticipation of the Messiah to come, bringing full and everlasting redemption. Now it is on the verge of potentially entering that bountiful and fruitful land, that God provides the means through which they would live and function, a holy law with the purpose of giving them religious, social, and moral structure with the purpose of preserving the seed line through which the Lion of the tribe of Judah would come, the Messiah.

Leviticus' theme is typically recognized to be "holiness." It was written so that an unholy nation might come to know and approach a holy God through the means of sacrifice and priestly mediation. God can only be approached in a holy manner and the source of holiness can only be God, therefore God had to provide the means by which the people could know holiness and in the process know God as much as was permitted, the result of which is Leviticus.

As with every other book in the Bible, Christ is pictured in Leviticus. This time He is seen in the institution of the office of the high priest (Hebrews 4:14-16). The high priest had to be free from infirmities and defects (Leviticus 21:10-23) and Christ was holy and without defect (Hebrews 7:26). The high priest made annual atonement for the people (Leviticus 16:3-16) and Christ made one atonement for all mankind (Hebrews 9:7-14). The high priest had charge over the tabernacle (Hebrews 9:6-7) and Christ is over His tabernacle today, the church (Hebrews 10:21). The high priest had authority in making judgments and decisions (John 18:13) and Christ has all authority today (Matthew 28:18). But the most important connection between the high priest and Christ is that the high priest served for life and was succeeded by a son (Hebrews 7:23) and Christ reigns as High Priest for life also, but shall have no successor for He ever lives (Hebrews 7:24,28).

The book of Leviticus is so rich and vitally important to the Christian's understanding today that it cannot afford to be left in the annals of history. Let it continue to be studied today with earnestness that its valuable lessons and principles shall continue to unlock the fullness of inspired Writ.

-Andy Brewer