

Kingdom of Heaven

In our studies of the Bible we oftentimes refer to the “kingdom gospels” or “kingdom hope and calling” or “Israel’s kingdom”. The gospels speak of both the “kingdom of heaven” and the “kingdom of God”. Many are looking forward to the Millennial Kingdom. Jesus on earth was called the King of the Jews. When Christ returns He is called the “King of kings.” Even the revered Lord’s Prayer refers to a future kingdom by saying “thy kingdom come”.

The Roman Catholic Church had a strong influence on the development of the Christian doctrine that exists today. The encyclopedic dictionary in the back of my Catholic Bible defines the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven as follows:

As used in the OT, this phrase variously refers to God’s reign over His Chosen people, the Chosen people themselves, or to His kingdom still to come. In the NT it is sometimes used with reference to the living Church, to the kingdom in heaven ruled by God, or the spiritual rule of Christ over mankind.

In Stuart Allen’s Book “The Kingdom of God in Heaven and on Earth” (pg. 3) some believe that the kingdom of God is expressed in the visible church of this age. This is the standpoint of the Roman Catholic Church who regards her adherents as the only true members of this kingdom. We will discuss later how this may have come to be.

Among the regenerate, the liberals, by quoting Luke 17:21 ‘The kingdom of God is within (among) you (you yourselves)’ claim that they and their agenda is the kingdom and purpose of God for mankind, but is actually the very opposite.

Therefore, many present-day Christian preachers claim to be “building the kingdom” and “bringing souls into the kingdom” thereby equating their “church” with “the kingdom”. So, it is clear that there exists some misguided teaching and gross misunderstanding on this very important topic. In fact it may be the very opposite of the truth and itself being a false kingdom.

I wonder even how many members of the Body of Christ have a grasp on what the kingdom of heaven really is. I will be the first to admit that I did not. This study is for my learning which I am sharing with you for your edification. I am sure at least one of you will learn from it. As for the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, the millennial kingdom, and the “Body of Christ”, we must “test (discern) the things that differ” says Philippians 1:10 and “Rightly divide the word of truth” says 2 Timothy 2:15.

Let’s start with some interesting facts in the KJV. The words “king”, kings, and “kingdom” combined appear 2,504 times in the whole volume of the Bible: 2,245 times in the OT and 259 times in the NT. So this appears to be a vast topic to study and appears to be significant in the context of the Bible. By almost a factor of ten it is stressed more in the OT. History reveals that those people didn’t have much of a voice in how their life was to be like as we have today in our “free” country.

Broken down further:

King: 1,456 OT 73 NT

Kings: 277 OT 32 NT

Kingdom: 215 OT 154 NT

Other related words appear in the KJV as follows:

Reign: 265 OT 21 NT

Rule: 247 OT 61 NT

Dominion: 44 OT 12 NT

Realm: 7 OT 0 NT

Something I found to be very surprising is that, even though we commonly talk about the absolute “sovereignty of God” over all things or “God’s sovereign grace”; where “sovereign” means “supreme in power, superior to all others, possessor of highest authority without control”, the word “sovereign” itself is not found once in our English Bible. This is evidence that there are certain truths that are either assumed or discerned from the Bible in spite of the fact they are not scripted. Oh, we have to be very careful with that principle! This is where wisdom, knowledge, and understanding play a significant role in the forming of doctrine.

The term “millennial kingdom” is not found in the Bible; but is commonly use to describe the reign of Christ on the earth for one thousand years (a millennium) recorded only in Revelation Chapter 20. It may be described elsewhere in the Bible as an “everlasting (age abiding) kingdom”.

The entire Bible is about God’s sphere of sovereignty. In a scriptural sense a “kingdom” is a sphere or realm of sovereignty and requires a king and a dominion. The “dom” in “kingdom” is “dominion” abbreviated and implies “a king’s dominion”. This is one aspect of the phrase “kingdom of God”. But the dominion here does not mean a territory with borders or a place.

This is similar to the fact that we have come to learn that the Body of Christ is not a “church”; it is a spiritual body of saints and not a denomination or a place. It is not even a physical congregation or assembly on earth. The word “church” comes from pagan roots and means a physical place to worship a god. A congregation or assembly describes a physical gathering of people on earth such as a synagogue. The Body of Christ is still being assembled; (Eph 2:22) *“In whom ye are also being built together for an habitation of God through the spirit”*. Our worship of the Father **shall and must** be in the spirit and in the truth as opposed to “in a place in the flesh” (John 4:23-24). Any kingdom in the Bible under the reign of God or the heavens is not a place, but a realm or sphere; many aspects of which consist of a called-out people.

A comprehensive study of all the kingdoms of the Bible would be quite an undertaking and perhaps beyond the limits of our attention span. There can also be another study on every false kingdom that runs prior to or parallel with every true kingdom. Even during Jesus’ life there was the quasi Roman/political Herodian dynasty (kingdom) over Israel. Remember there were five different “Herods” in the NT. Is there a false kingdom in operation today?

The purpose of this study is to focus on the kingdoms identified in the NT and any connection to them in the OT. In particular our goal is to understand the meaning of the phrase “kingdom of heaven” in Matthew’s Gospel and its proper place in God’s purpose for the ages.

There are seven separate “kingdoms” identified in the NT and are listed in App 112 of the CB:

1. The Kingdom of (or from the)Heaven(s) (only Matt 32 times)
2. The Kingdom (sovereignty) of God (NT 69 times)
 - a. Can mean God’s rule over all His creation
 - b. Can mean the same as the kingdom of heaven (#1)

- c. Can mean the Millennial Kingdom
3. The Kingdom of their Father (Matt 13:43) Hypothetical: postponed
 4. The Kingdom of the Son of Man (Matt 16:28) Hypothetical: postponed
 5. The Kingdom of His Dear Son (Col 1:13)
 6. The Everlasting (Age-abiding) Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:11)
 7. The Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ (Rev 3:21, 11:15, 20:4) (Between Epiphaneia and Parousia)

Each of these has its own peculiar and particular sense, which must not be confused with another. All of these will eventually be dissolved into No. 2.a. These kingdoms are the subject of another study.

Note that in Paul's Prison Epistles concerning the mystery of the Body of Christ kingdoms are mentioned:

Eph 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the **kingdom of Christ and of God**.

Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the **kingdom of His dear Son**

Col 4:11 these only are my fellowworkers unto the **kingdom of God**, which have been a comfort to me

2 Tim 4:1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at **His appearing and His kingdom**

2 Tim 4:18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto **His heavenly kingdom**.

In Rev 12:10 we have "**the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ**".

For the difference between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God see CB App 114

1. The Kingdom of (or from the)Heaven(s)

Used only by Matthew in harmony with the purpose of his Gospel: Christ as Jehovah's King
The purpose of Christ's ministry to Israel (not from or out of this world)
Both advents of Christ are from the Heavens to the earth

 - Has Messiah for its king
 - From heaven, under the heavens upon the earth
 - Is limited in scope
 - Is political in its sphere
 - It is Jewish and exclusive in its character
 - It is National in its aspect
 - It is the special subject of OT prophecy
 - It is dispensational in its duration
2. The Kingdom (sovereignty) of God

Universal, from eternity past to eternity future, over all and embraces all

 - Has God for its ruler
 - Is in heaven over the earth
 - It is unlimited in scope

- It is moral and spherical in its sphere
- It is inclusive in its character (every family)
- It is universal in its aspect
- It is the subject of NT revelation
- It will be eternal in its duration

Our beloved brother in the Body, Ronnie McCurry, has just gone through several studies showing some of the differences between the kingdom of heaven and the called-out Body of Christ.

What is the kingdom of heaven? The kingdom of heaven is a period of Israel's preparation and testing for the Millennial Kingdom. (Repeat) The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom from the heavens. This takes place between the two advents of Christ. As soon as Christ leaves the heavens to return to the earth, it is no longer from the heavens. Jesus replied to Pilate "my kingdom is not of this world (*kosmos*)" (John 18:36). Jesus brought a doctrine DOWN from heaven to the Jews who were living by their own earthly doctrine. What Jesus brought from heaven to Israel on the earth was "the good news or gospel of the kingdom". It is not a gospel of salvation for today. This is not a gospel to the called-out Body of Christ. This is a gospel to put Israel back on a heavenly spiritual and moral path to reign with the Messiah in a restored kingdom of His righteousness. What Jesus and his disciples and apostles taught up to the end of The Acts was the message of the kingdom of heaven and is tied to the New Covenant and the grace of God. This message will be proclaimed again when between the time of the Epiphaneia and the time of the Parousia as the everlasting (age abiding) gospel.

Oscar Baker said the kingdom of heaven is a figure of speech. When the prodigal son said, "I have sinned against heaven", he meant that he sinned against God who is in heaven. When someone says "heaven is my witness" it means God is my witness. The "kingdom of God" is used in Mark and Luke where Matthew uses the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of heaven is a prelude to the millennial kingdom. It is a time for working for a reward. It is a time for laying up treasure in heaven. The promotions, rewards and treasures will be given out when the Lord returns to set up his kingdom. Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me. To give every man according as his works shall be (Rev 22:12)

The forty years in the wilderness was a period of preparation and testing of Israel for entrance into the Promised Land. Even though a doctrine from heaven was given to Moses for Israel, many failed the test and only a few entered in. This was a type of the kingdom of heaven period and is given for our learning and for our understanding the concept and purpose of the kingdom of heaven. The Jews almost made it another forty years (39 years) from John the Baptizer until the end of the Acts before they were set aside temporarily.

Let us turn to the Gospel of Matthew where the phrase "kingdom of heaven" is found thirty-two times and discover what we can learn about this. In the other Gospels the phrase "kingdom of God" is used. This begs the question "why?" For one, I believe this throws the spotlight on the theme of Matthew's Gospel. Another reason is that it forces us to study and discover that the "kingdom of God" can mean (1) God's sovereignty over all of His creation (2) It can mean the same as the "kingdom of heaven" or (3) it can sometimes mean the millennial kingdom. Each is determined by the context where it is used.

Before we look at Matthews Gospel, let's do a flashback to Israel's earthly kingdom and how it came into being. Before Abraham and Israel were called out there were many kings and kingdoms in the world. A kingdom is first mentioned in Gen 10:10 "the beginning of his kingdom was Babel"; speaking of

Nimrod. Even though Adam was given dominion (Gen 1:26) he was never called a king. A king is first mentioned in Gen 12:15 under the title Pharaoh: the official title of all the kings of Egypt. This is the Pharaoh who took Abram's half-sister-wife, Sarah, into his house.

God had called out and had sole dominion over Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as well as the twelve sons of Jacob who was called Israel. Unlike other peoples of the earth, these were never under earthly kings. God used Moses, Joshua, and several judges until Samuel to rule over and guide Israel. They were "one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice...promised for all". So what happened?

What happened was like what is happening in our country today. People love sin and do not want to have laws and enforcers and judges and prisons. They want to do whatever they want to do. At the end of the Judges it says in Judges 21:25 *"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did what was right in his own eyes"*. Human rulers can be manipulated whereas God cannot be manipulated or bribed. These other nations that they were exposed to had some freedom to do what they wanted to do.

So Israel rejected God's reign over them. (1 Samuel 8:1-8) Israel wanted Samuel to make them a king of their own to judge them. The LORD directed Samuel to choose Saul, the son of Kish to be captain over Israel. When Saul led Israel to slay the Ammonites they made Saul their king. This act was considered wicked and an evil sin (1 Sam 12). Saul eventually disobeyed God, rebelled, and was rejected because he rejected God.

The LORD then told Samuel "I have provided me a king". And Samuel found and anointed David, the son of Jesse. David reigned as king over Israel for forty years (2 Sam 5:3-5). This was the beginning of the earthly kingdom of Israel. Although Israel had their kings, we know who was really in charge. After Solomon succeeded David, the kingdom was divided into two kingdoms. Each kingdom eventually disobeyed God, rebelled, did wickedness, and each ended in captivity by Gentile kingdoms.

However, God made a covenant with David (2 Sam 7:12, 1 Kings 2:4, 8:25) *"I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever"* and *"if thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul there shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel"*. This speaks beyond the earthly kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of heaven to a restored kingdom of Israel in the future where a descendent of David, the LORD's Christ, will reign. Even though Israel never kept their part of the covenant, God will keep His part; and will cause Israel to keep their part in the end.

Here is an interesting tidbit: the names "Messiah" and "Messias" only appear in the book of Daniel and John's Gospel. The Jews considered Daniel to be a prophet to the Gentiles. John's Gospel was written to the Gentiles.

Here is another point to keep in mind. The Acts period began in A.D. 29. The Gospel of Matthew was written early in the Acts period. The book of Revelation was written by John several years later (A.D. 43) during the Acts period. So the events of the great tribulation, the return of Christ, and the millennial kingdom were not yet revealed in their details.

The word "kingdom" is used 118 times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is only found in three verses of the Gospel of John. John's Gospel is not a kingdom gospel.

Matthew Chapter 1 verifies that Jesus Christ was of the legal and royal line of King David through Joseph. Chapter 2 records the birth of Jesus according to prophecy. Chapter 3 introduces John the Baptizer and the first proclamation of the "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" in 3:2. Chapter 4 is the baptism, adoption, and testing of Jesus before He proclaims that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" in

4:17. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 record the Sermon on the Mount which sets forth the doctrine from heaven pertaining to the kingdom of heaven. Chapters 8 and 9 concern the Lord, his person; proclaimed as “Lord” and “son of man”: His miracles and calls. Chapter 10 begins the mission of the twelve disciples: *Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Chapters 11 and 12 concern His teaching, preaching, and miracles.

There are eight parables in Matthew Chapter 13 that tell us some things about the kingdom of heaven. The first four are spoken outside the house from a boat to the multitude standing on the seashore. (Now I have not been able to follow The CB notes on whose house it means here. That is not important). The second four are spoken inside the house to only His disciples. This signifies both external characteristics and internal characteristics of the kingdom of heaven.

The structure for these eight parables is given in Appendix 145 in the Companion Bible. About two years ago I wrote an overlapping biographical summary of the lives of E. W. Bullinger and Charles H. Welch. In doing so I learned that the only contribution that Charles H. Welch made to the CB is this Appendix 145. His discovery that there are eight parables and not seven, as was taught in the traditional churches of his day, was his breakaway point from traditional teaching to study the Bible on his own.

Tonight we will only have time for the first parable which tells us some interesting external things about the kingdom of heaven. I developed and sent out a timeline that I created from Oscar Baker’s fourteen lessons on the “Kingdom of Heaven” in the ***Truth for Today*** bound volumes and Stuart Allen’s ***The Kingdom of God in Heaven and on Earth*** and the ***Companion Bible***.

Let’s read Matthew 13:1-23

¹ The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. ² And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. ³ And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; (Mark 4:1-3, Luke 8:4)

¹⁸ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. (The sower represents a servant of God who does the sowing.)

⁴ And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: (the sower is John the Baptizer Matt 11:11-15) (Mark 4:4, Luke 8:5) This takes one half of a year.

¹⁹ When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which is sown in his heart. (The seed being sown is the word of the kingdom. Notice in Mark’s parable the seed is the word and in Luke’s rendering the seed is the word of God. Could this affect one’s understanding of this parable? A traditional Christian would say that the word or the word of God is the Bible or the Gospel. Well, at this time the NT is just beginning and is far from being complete. Matthew’s rendering is to the point, “the word of the kingdom”, the kingdom gospel.) This is he which received seed by the way side. (The repository of the seed is the mind and the heart of men of Israel)

⁵ Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: ⁶ And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

(the sower is Jesus Matt 4:17, then the Twelve Matt 10:5-7, then the Seventy Luke 10:1-20) (Mark 4:6, Luke 8:6) This takes up the three and a half years of Jesus' ministry on the earth.

²⁰ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy received it; ²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended (stumbles).

⁷ And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: Peter in Acts 2:38 "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ". Peter in Acts 3:18-26 and the Twelve. James said in Acts 21:20 "Thou seest brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe ; and they are all zealous of the law"? as in Gal 3:1-5, 10-13; 4:9; 5:1-4 Acts 28 (Mark 4:7, Like 8:7) This is the 35 years from A.D. 29 to A. D. 64 at Acts 28:28

²² He also that received seed among thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

What occurs between verses 7 & 8 is not seen here because it is not mentioned here is a mystery not yet revealed that interrupted the sowing of the seed. There was to be a suspension of the sowing because, as you see, the results have not been very good. When Israel became Lo-Ammi, not God's people, there became no Israel to receive the seed. There was no ground at all for the sowing. The word of the kingdom became silent.

Roger Dillman and I come from the cornbelt where the ground is flat and fertile which is ideal for growing commercial crops. I have been to states like Missouri, Arkansas, and eastern Kansas where the ground is hilly and rocky where it is a struggle to grow commercial crops. I've been to Poland where they still sow seed by hand just a few miles from Germany where high tech farming is employed. Seeds that do not bear fruit are worthless.

⁸ But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. The traditional Christian typically believes that this is now: the church age. But this parable is not given to the Gentiles. (This is to Israel in the future as in Matt 24:14)(Mark 4:8, Luke 8:8) This period is the final three weeks of years of Daniel's prophecy yet to be fulfilled. The "how long" in Isaiah 6:11, "the end *telos*" of Matt 24:13, in vs.24:3 "the end *sunteleia* of the world: meeting together of all that marks the consummation of the age.

²³ But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

This is displayed in John's vision of Rev. 7:9-17. When will this last sowing take place? Mark 4:29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. This fourth period will take place during Revelation between the Epiphaneia and the Parousia.

This kingdom of heaven period will end with an extension of days (75 days) as in Dan 12:13 which concern the other parables in Matthew's gospel. These we will take up next time.

It is interesting to study and compare the parable of the sower as rendered in Mark 4:1-20 and Luke 8:4-15. The parable of the sower is not found in John's Gospel.

⁹Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (Mark 4:9) (Luke 8:8) ^{Matt 13:}
¹⁶But blessed are your eyes for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

Is it possible that we are given to see even more detail of the parable of the sower that the disciples of the Lord? When you look at the timeline, what a blessing we have been given to see how it fits into God's plan for Israel.

Ephesians 1:8-10

Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; ⁹ Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: ¹⁰ That in ⁸ the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

If we don't understand what happened at the end of The Acts, we will never rightly and truly understand the Bible and God's plan for the ages and how we fit into that plan.

I don't see how anyone who does not understand and acknowledge the dispensation of the mystery can possibly come to a true understanding of Matthew's parables; especially the parable of the sower. These parables concern only Israel and not the Body of Christ.

You can easily see how it could be possible for Christianity to see this parable in a whole different sense and doctrine. Their timeline would likely start at John the Baptist and end at the so-called "rapture" or maybe even at end of the millennial kingdom and would include the Body of Christ as the seed falling on the good ground.

For those who believe the "church" started in Acts 2 or Acts 13, in what part of this parable do they see themselves? Their preachers labor so hard to explain some application of this parable in the present age. They do not apply these "grounds" as periods of time. They somehow apply it all to the present.

If "Among the thorns" is the Acts period, then are they still among the thorns? But they, of course, would want to see themselves on the "good ground"? If their "church" period started during the Acts with the thorns, when would it have changed to the good ground? Wouldn't there be then a mixture the thorns and the good ground running concurrently? If the "church" are those on the good ground, then they would have to see themselves as the good seed of the kingdom of heaven bringing forth the good fruit. And when would this end? At the "rapture"?

Would some say the good ground would have to be America in the present time and the others places would be elsewhere in the world?

2 Cor 9:10 ⁹(As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. ¹⁰ Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

Since the time of Acts 28:28 I believe Israel has been set aside until a future time. I believe the hope of a restored kingdom and the coming of Israel's Messiah to reign as King in that restored kingdom has been postponed. Therefore the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom gospel have also been interrupted as well. The reason is so that God can fulfill His promise to bless the Gentiles in a different way while His dealings with Israel are suspended. Therefore, there is no kingdom gospel or hope or calling being

offered in this age. The Body of Christ is not part of a time of preparation for the millennial kingdom. Our dispensation has nothing to do with working for rewards or laying up treasures in heaven. We were chosen before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4) for a separate purpose. These parables utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world (Matt 13:35). Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matt 25:34).

There is a controversy even among us as to whether any Gentiles will be saved after this dispensation of the Body of Christ is completed. All of these parables in Matthew, Mark, and Luke concerning the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God concern only Israel. Any Gentiles included were those grafted in during the third period (in The Acts). What hope will there be for Gentiles after this dispensation? The guest at the wedding feast will be those Israelites who were not the elect.

We know that the salvation of God in John's Gospel is salvation from the wrath of our sin nature, but the gift of salvation in Paul's gospel of the dispensation of the mystery is into the membership of the called out Body of Christ. The body of Christ has its own separate kingdom:

3. The Kingdom of His Dear Son (Col 1:13)

- Heavens out of the heavens *epouranios*
- Has Christ as the Head of His Body
- Is limited in scope
- Is spiritual in its sphere
- Is exclusive in its character
- Is international in its aspect
- Exclusive to the Body of Christ
- Dispensational
- Positioned under the sovereignty of the Risen Lord Christ Jesus

What a special blessing it is to be given the eyes and ears to see and understand the full scope of the kingdom of heaven that applies to Israel.

Ala R. Naas June 2020