

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

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A. THE SCRIPTURES TEACH THAT THESE TWO TERMS ARE OFTEN USED INTERCHANGEABLY TO REFER TO THE SAME THING.

1. For example both "*the Kingdom of Heaven*" and "*the Kingdom of God*" are used to refer to God's Spiritual and Universal Kingdom (Matt. 16:19; Jn. 3:3,5) Note Matt. 19:23,24.

Notice this Spiritual and Universal Kingdom comprises all those who have been saved and have come under the spiritual rule of God (I Chron. 29:11). This, therefore, includes all the O.T. saints, as well as, all the N.T. saints who presently make up the Church, which is the body of Christ.

2. Secondly, both "*the Kingdom of Heaven*" and "*the Kingdom of God*" are used to refer to the Millennial Kingdom which will be established at Christ's Second Coming (Matt. 8:11,12; Lk. 14:15).

Notice this Millennial Kingdom is the kingdom which Christ offered to Israel when they rejected Him. It was the literal, earthly, Davidic Kingdom which was offered to Israel but has been postponed as a result of Israel's rejection. When Christ comes at His Second Coming He will establish this literal Kingdom upon this earth and reign for a thousand years (Isa. 24:23; Rev. 19:11-16; 20:1-6).

B. THE SCRIPTURES TEACH THAT THERE IS A MYSTERY FORM OF THE KINGDOM, WHICH THE JEWS DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT, THAT WILL PRELUDE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EARTHLY MILLENNIAL KINGDOM.

1. Notice first of all it was no mystery that God was going to establish the literal earthly Davidic Kingdom (Dan. 2:44; II Sam. 7:16; Acts 1:6; Luke 2:25; Mk. 15:43). It was a mystery, however, or a "*truth not previously revealed*," that certain things concerning the church and Israel would transpire before the earthly Davidic Kingdom would be established.
2. Notice "*the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven*" are things which will occur between the time of Christ's rejection and His Second Coming. The seven parables of Matt. 13:3-50 cover this period of time.
 - a. These *Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven* would involve how things will develop during the dispensation of the church.

(1) First, during the dispensation of the church, there will be a seed-sowing program in which Gentiles primarily will be saved. From this we can expect this age to be characterized by *no professions* from some (Matt. 13:19), by *shallow*

professions by others (Matt. 13:20,22), and by some *true professions* by others (Matt. 13:23).

- (2) Secondly, during the dispensation of the church, we can expect a counterfeit sowing by the devil of those who profess to be children of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:25). These will be like **tares** among the **wheat**. At Christ's Second Coming He will separate these (Matt. 13:30, 40-42). From this we can see that the seed-sowing program will continue through the tribulation period after the church has been raptured.
- (3) Thirdly, from the parable of the "**mustard seed**" we can expect Christianity to be characterized by enormous but unnatural growth and to become inwardly corrupt (Matt. 13:31,32).
- (4) Fourthly, from the parable of "**the leaven**" we can expect a system of false religion to arise from within Christendom which will make it apostate as a whole (Matt. 13:33).
- (5) Fifthly, from the parable of "**the pearl of great price**," we can expect the church, which was born out of injury like a pearl, to grow as a living organism until it is raptured out of this world (Matt. 13:45,46).

b. These "**Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven**" also involve how things will develop during the tribulation period and how they will relate to the Jews specifically.

- (1) Firstly, from the parable of "**the hidden treasure**" (Matt. 13:44), and other passages we can conclude that during the tribulation period a remnant of the Jews will turn to Christ and will be saved at His Second Coming (Rom. 11:26-29; Rev. 7:3-8). During the tribulation period the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached again and multitudes will of Jews will come to repentance and be saved (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 14:1-3). This will be Christ's hidden treasure.
- (2) Secondly, from the parable of "**the dragnet**" (Matt. 13:47-51) and other Scriptures we can conclude that Christ will judge the Jews (Matt. 25:1-30) and the Gentiles (Matt. 25:31-46) at His Second Coming and will separate the saved from the unsaved (Matt. 25:1-30).

C. THE SCRIPTURES TEACH THAT THESE TWO TERMS (THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD) MAY REFER TO ONE OF THREE PARTICULAR DESIGNATIONS AND ONLY THE CONTEXT CAN DETERMINE WHICH ONE.

1. The "**Kingdom of God**" and "**the Kingdom of Heaven**" may "contextually" refer to the Millennial Kingdom.
 - a. Note how the term "**Kingdom of Heaven**" may contextually refer to the Millennial Kingdom (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 25:1,14).
 - b. Note how the term "**Kingdom of God**" may contextually refer to the Millennial Kingdom (Mk. 14:25; 15:43; Lk. 9:27; 10:9,11; 13:28, 29; 14:15; 19:11; 22:16,18;

23:51; I Cor. 15:24).

2. **"The Kingdom of God"** and **"the Kingdom of Heaven"** may contextually refer to God's Spiritual Kingdom.
 - a. Note how the term **"Kingdom of Heaven"** may contextually refer to God's Spiritual Kingdom (Matt. 16:19; 18:3; 19:12,14,23,24).
 - b. Note how the term **"Kingdom of God"** may contextually refer to God's Spiritual Kingdom (Matt. 6:33; 12:28; 21:31; 23:13; Mk. 9:47; 10:14,15,23,24,25; 12:34; Lk. 9:62; 12:31; 17:21; 18:16,17,24,25,29; Jn. 3:3,5; Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23,31; Rom.14:17; I Cor. 4:20; 6:9,10; Ga. 5:21; Col. 4:11).
3. **"The Kingdom of Heaven"** and **"the Kingdom of God"** may contextually refer to the mystery form of the Kingdom before the literal kingdom is established.
 - a. Note how the term **"Kingdom of Heaven"** may contextually refer to the mystery form of the Kingdom. Matt. 13:11,24,31,33,44,45,47,52; 20:1; 22:2).
 - b. Note how the term **"Kingdom of God"** may contextually refer to the mystery form of the Kingdom (Mk. 4:11; Lk. 8:10; 18:20).

It is significant to note that the gospel of Matthew predominately uses the term **"Kingdom of Heaven"** when referring to the Millennial Kingdom. Matthew never uses the term **"Kingdom of God"** when referring to the Millennial Kingdom as the other gospel writers do. There is good reason for this usage because Matthew presents the Lord Jesus as the King of Israel and the rightful heir to the Davidic Throne. The literal, earthly, Davidic, Millennial, Kingdom is what Matthew, no doubt, had in mind when he used the term "Kingdom of Heaven." The other gospel writers, on the other hand, never refer to the Millennial Kingdom as "the Kingdom of Heaven." From this distinction it should be noted that "the Kingdom of heaven" which was presented in Matthew's gospel, by the Lord Jesus and His disciples to Israel, was none other than the literal, earthly, Davidic, Millennial Kingdom.

Much confusion has arisen over interpretations to make Christ presently seated on David's throne and ruling over the church as a King. The Scriptures nowhere refer to Christ as the King of the church, and He is certainly not reigning over Israel at this time.

Attempts to replace Israel with the church (covenant theology) or to believe that the church is presently fulfilling the spiritual aspects of a yet future literal Kingdom to be established (Progressive dispensationalism) are in error and have abandoned a literal interpretation of God's Word and the "dispensational key" to the Scriptures which is supported by a literal hermeneutic. Moreover, such interpretations fail to recognize that God has a separate program with the Gentiles, the Church, and Israel and that these programs must be kept separate (I Cor. 10:32).

Notice Christ will reign over Israel when He sits upon His throne at His Second Coming (Matt. 25:31). At that time He will occupy the throne of David as legal heir to that throne and it will be a reign over a **literal**, earthly, millennial Kingdom not a **spiritual** Kingdom.

From the foregoing distinctions we may gather that **"the Kingdom of Heaven"** and **"the Kingdom of God"** are used interchangeably of the same thing as noted in Matt. 19:23,24. Secondly,

we must determine the context in which either term is used. Is it referring to the Millennial Kingdom, to God's spiritual and universal Kingdom, or to the mystery form of the Kingdom which comprises the dispensation of the church and the tribulation period? Thirdly, it should be seen that those in the church program are also a part of God's Spiritual and Universal Kingdom but they are also under the spiritual rule of Christ, who is the head of the church. Fourthly, we must not confuse the Spiritual and Universal Kingdom, of which the church is a part, with the literal, earthly, Davidic, Millennial Kingdom promised to Israel. This Kingdom will be established after the church is raptured and the tribulation period comes to an end. Finally, it should be noted that Christ is not now ruling from the Davidic throne over the church, and the church has not replaced Israel and consequently none of God's promises concerning the Millennial Kingdom have been abrogated.

SOURCES

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