

The Kingdom Way

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Introduction

Why did Matthew refer to the kingdom of heaven whilst all others refer to the kingdom of God? – Here we seek to understand why the Holy Spirit, who breathed the scripture through the writers, made this distinction.

We will find that whilst there is some overlap between the two terms they are not completely interchangeable, giving us guidance to how to live today.

Chapter 1

What do we mean by 'the Kingdom of God?'

Jesus spoke of John the Baptist – there was no greater prophet, but *'he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.'*

(Luke 7:28)

The bible uses the phrase 'Kingdom of God' many times – mostly in the Gospel of Luke, Acts and Paul's letters. Matthew uses the expression 'Kingdom of Heaven.' Whilst these are the two main descriptions there are others – so we will start by bringing some definitions:

A) Kingdom of God

The sphere of God's own rule. It was self evident when Jesus was on earth, being the sphere of His working, demonstrated by His dominion over satan, over sickness, over natural forces such as wind and waves, over death, and by His ability to turn water into wine and to multiply bread and fish. Jesus did these things through the power of the Spirit who anointed Him, (Luke 4:18) and delegated some of the powers to His disciples. This was the Kingdom of God in action.

Now it is the sphere of the workings of the Holy Spirit. Where God's rule over all of the above is intended to be demonstrated by the power of the Holy Spirit working through believers – **The Kingdom of God is within you.**

Now it is *'righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit'* and *'not of words but of power.'* (Romans 14:17 and 1 Corinthians 4:20.)

This phrase, Kingdom of God, is used everywhere except Matthew (though he does use it 5 times when referring to Jesus coming kingdom) because it applies to the New Covenant time we live in and to the coming millennium rule of Jesus Christ.

B) Kingdom of heaven

Epitomised by the phrase, *'thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'* It is about the earth and heaven together in a broader sense. Earth is part of the kingdom of heaven and is infiltrated by evil as demonstrated in the parables.

This phrase seems to be used exclusively by Matthew (over 30 times) His gospel seems to have particular application to Israel – explained further later on.

C) My Father's Kingdom

Used once only in Matthew 26:29 when Jesus says He will not drink of the cup (of Passover) until He drinks it again *'in My Father's Kingdom,'* at the consummation of the marriage to His bride. It is a reference for us as His engaged, but not yet fully married, bride. Drinking this cup on earth with His disciples was a token of His commitment to be fulfilled when we, the bride, rise to meet Him in the air and are taken to His Father's house, where a place has been prepared for us.

D) The Kingdom of the Son of His love.

Used once in Colossians 1:13. The region of blessing where Jesus is the centre.

E) 'My Kingdom is not of this world.'

(John18:36) Akin to A) above – refers to where Jesus is ruling Himself. Will be fulfilled in the period known as the millennium.
– see Luke 22:30. Revelation 11:17-19, 15:3-4.

F) 'Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord'

Used by Peter in his second letter would incorporate E) above and on into eternity.

Chapter 2

His Kingdom / our Kingdom / whose kingdom?

A question worth asking?

It started like this -

Psalm 24:1 informs us, *'the earth is the Lord's and all its fullness the world and all who dwell therein.'*

In the beginning Adam and Eve were given dominion over *'the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'*

So the Lord owns the earth and everything in it. He then delegated dominion to man, as expressed in Genesis 1:26 quoted above. The earth - a kingdom for man to dominate.

But...

It went wrong! By disobeying the Lord God man effectively forfeited his dominion to the prince of darkness. In the gospel of John Jesus refers to Satan as the ruler or the prince of this world. (Chapter 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11) Man's failure.

Satan has become the prince of this world!

So God chose Israel

So the Lord God chose a people to be His chosen ones on the earth. He would be their God and would bless them abundantly and they would be an expression of His Kingdom. So a theocratic nation was established. But the people 'rebelled' against the Lord God by asking for a King to rule over them. We find the account in the first book of Samuel chapter 8. Even though they were warned that a King would impose a heavy load, nevertheless the people wanted a King, like all the other nations.

So the ***Kingdom of Israel*** was established. Kings came and went, some good but most bad in varying degrees. The end result was a nation who had become very legalistic and lost any measure of living relationship with the Lord their God.

The Lord God sent warning after warning through the prophets. The Lord sent promises of a coming Messiah through the words of scripture.

But there was no living relationship with the Lord God - so much so that when the promised Messiah came they rejected Him. Man's failure again.

(Even the disciples, who walked with Jesus, hadn't got the picture clear. In Acts 1 the risen Jesus appears before them and their question is, '*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*'

Jesus did not correct them, but said, '*it is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.*'

The restoration of Israel, as chief nation on earth, was not for then, or for now, but will be again in the future.)

So God creates a body of believers on earth

So now we come to God's plan for today. The Kingdom of God will not, at this time, be set up on earth. However, by faith, we can taste some of the powers of the age to come. God's plan today is the born again, believing body of Christ.

The plan today is, 'the kingdom of God is within you.'

Chapter 3

What does the Kingdom of God look like now? And why.

For now the kingdom of God is where He is present and ruling – that is within every born again believer.

The kingdom for this time will now take on a unique strategy, different from its previous forms. It is the promised 'New Covenant.'

When Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when would the Kingdom of God come, His reply was that the Kingdom would not come by observation but that the *Kingdom of God is within you*. (Luke 17:21) John gives a bit more clarity and understanding in his statement in chapter 14 : 17 – *'The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.'*

Paul puts it very succinctly, *'Christ in you the hope of glory.'*

Colossians 1:27

... and to the Romans, *'the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.'*
(14:17)

For today the kingdom of God is not a physical kingdom on earth but a spiritual kingdom in every believer.

For our time – *‘the kingdom of God is within you.’*

It is essential to be born again – Spirit to spirit. One is born again when one places their trust in Jesus and the effectiveness of His sacrifice on the cross at Calvary. Jesus makes this clear in His discussion with Nicodemus recorded in John, chapter three, verses one to twenty one. We must be born both of water (natural birth) and of the Holy Spirit (rebirth of the human spirit.)

Jesus to Nicodemus:

You must be born again.

‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.’ John 3:16

We receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness when we believe. The gift of righteousness is no less than the person of the Holy Spirit entering into our born again human spirit and dwelling within us as we just read in John 14:17.

Righteousness means ‘right standing.’ We can appreciate that our eternal spirit is now in complete right standing with God. Furthermore we can appreciate that our right standing is guaranteed, as Paul states to the Ephesians and to the Corinthians.

The Holy Spirit will never leave – John reminds us *‘He is in us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit.’* And he tells us that, *‘whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.’* (1 John 4:13 and 3:9)

This is wonderful news. Though my soul and my flesh may sin, and may even deny Jesus, my born again spirit is eternally secure

because He lives in me – Hence the guarantee of our eternal salvation. Paul confirms this to Timothy – *‘For if we died with Him we shall also live with Him. If we endure we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him He will deny us. If we are faithless He remains faithful: He cannot deny Himself.’* (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

In reality we all do deny Jesus from time to time through thoughts or actions - no one is exempt. However hard we try, we consistently fail to live up to the high calling of complete holiness, grieving the Spirit and casting a cloud over our relationship with the Lord. Glory be! We are forgiven and the way back is simple – *‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’*
1 John 1:9

... and He remains faithful.

For our time - *‘Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.’*

Righteousness

This is the Lord God’s intention for us - we are to dwell in the absolute certainty of our righteousness - right standing with God, described above. Over time, as we are progressively changed by the Holy Spirit from one degree of glory to another our ways will become more holy – thus exhibiting our righteousness.

Peace

In the certainty of the fundamental gift of righteousness, received from Jesus when we first believed, we can enjoy peace.

'God has called us to peace.' 1 Corinthians 7:15.

'Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.' Colossians 3:15

'He, Himself is our peace.' Ephesians 2:14

Joy

'These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.' John 15:11

'The joy of the Lord is your strength' Nehemiah 8:10

How to dwell in righteousness, peace and joy.

'Aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside and that you may lack nothing.' 1 Thessalonians 4:11

- Avoid ungodly ambition which includes doing things for the Lord when He has not instigated it.

'And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.' Colossians 3:23-4

- Everything we do is a testimony to those who observe and watch us. Therefore be faithful, giving your best in what you do.

'As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.'
John 15:9-10

- Jesus commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength and to love your neighbour as yourself. These two things fulfil the whole requirement of the law.

Pray therefore – Holy Spirit fill me with more and more love for Jesus and for those around me.

'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' Philippians 4:6-7

'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.'

1 John 4: 18-19

Why?

Everything that relies on man ends in failure as we have seen. Only that which God, Himself completes will succeed. Even in the coming millennium period, when Jesus rules in person, man's failure will be seen – at the end of the period there is a mass rebellion as people follow satan again.

The answer to why, is that the Lord God wants a big family to share His love, and the only way to achieve that is for Him to do a work of righteousness in those who believe in His Son.

We who have placed our trust in Jesus, and have been born again, are the main part of the eternal plan.

Chapter 4

Jesus description of the Kingdom of Heaven.

First we need to go back to Genesis where we find the account of creation. In chapter 1 verses 6, 7, 8, 14, 15, 17 and 20 we find the word firmament – meaning an expanse, which God called heaven (verse 8) From within this firmament God created the earth. Into this firmament God placed the sun, the moon and the stars.

So this is the heaven and the earth - called together the Kingdom of heaven. This kingdom is wholly owned by God, but within it we find His enemy satan.

Satan started his existence as Lucifer (light bearer), a very high ranking angel who challenged God – Isaiah 14 : 12-15 and Ezekiel 28:11-19. When he was rejected his light was removed and darkness became his domain. He manifested himself as the serpent in the Garden of Eden, where he deceived Eve and thus sin was introduced to the earth.

'Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.' Genesis 3:1

Jesus describes the kingdom of heaven in parables

There are a number of parables where Jesus makes it clear that the kingdom of heaven is infected by sin and affected by the enemy, for example:

Infected by sin

'The kingdom of heaven is like, leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.'

Matthew 13:33

Leaven in the bible is always representing sin. In the parable the woman is Eve who introduced the leaven (sin) which affected the whole world. Three measures could refer to the three main dispensations – that is the 2,000 years before Israel, the 2,000 years of Israel and the 2,000 years of the current age. Or it could refer to the three parts that make up the human being – body, soul and our human spirit before being born again. Or it could refer to Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism. Whatever, the meaning is clear - the leaven, sin, infects everything.

Affected by the devil

The parable of the wheat and the tares found in chapter 13: 24-30 has the account of the devil sowing bad seed into the field of the earth.

'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" He said to them. "An enemy has done this." The servants said to him, "Do you want us to go and gather them up?" But he said,

“No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let them grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

The explanation is found in verses 37 to 43. Jesus makes it clear that -

The man represents the Son of Man.

The field is the world.

Good seed is the sons of the kingdom

Tares the sons of the wicked one.

The enemy is the devil

The harvest is the end of the age

The reapers are the angels.

Once you identify each part the explanation becomes obvious!

The parables make it clear the earth is a part of the kingdom of heaven.

Living in the kingdom of heaven – looking for the Kingdom of God.

From Jesus description of the kingdom of heaven it is clear that it is all around us now - it includes the earth as we know it now. It is also clear that Jesus speaks of His own coming Kingdom as the Kingdom of God. They are not interchangeable though clearly there is considerable overlap.

Chapter 5

Jesus Kingdom

We can now establish that Jesus wanted the people to see that His coming Kingdom of God was of a different and better, much better, character.

He sent out 70, with delegated authority, to go ahead of Him to every city that He was going to go to:

'After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; therefore pray to Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.

Go your way; behold I send you as lambs among wolves. Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. But whatever house you enter, first say, Peace to this house. And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the labourer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.

Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick there, and say to them, the Kingdom of God has come near you. But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, the very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you.

Nevertheless know this, that the Kingdom of God has come near you.” Luke 10:1-12.

So here we see the 70 going out into part of the kingdom of heaven (the cities of the earth) to heal the sick – and the scripture goes on to say, cast out demons. Whether they accept you or not tell them. “The Kingdom of God has come near you.”

Jesus frequently demonstrated His coming Kingdom by healing, by deliverance from demons, by raising the dead and by other miracles.

In the book Acts we see many accounts of the disciples doing the same thing – demonstrating His coming kingdom.

Now, we who are born again and spirit filled are empowered to do the same things – not in any strength of our own but in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This coming Kingdom

To illustrate the fact that we cannot establish the kingdom of God on earth let's take just a 'snap shot' of some of the features of the coming kingdom:

Here is an Old Testament passage:

Isaiah chapter eleven is describing the coming kingdom of Jesus, here referred to as the Branch and as the Rod.

‘The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the

cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.' (verses 6-9)

Here is a New Testament passage:

Revelation chapter twenty one has a description of the bride city:

'Come I will show you the bride , the Lamb's wife And he showed me the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God but I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it but there shall by no means enter anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.'

It should be abundantly clear that the millennial reign of Jesus Christ is over a very different earth than we now experience. Yet still one where humans live and breath, go about their daily lives, and have children.

Scripture tells us this Kingdom of God – the personal reign of Jesus, lasts for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:2,3,4,5,6, and 7)

Chapter 6

Tasting the powers of the age to come.

We have already seen that the healings, deliverance and other miracles are demonstrations of the powers of the age to come – the millennial age when Jesus rules in person – the Kingdom of God. In the letter to the Hebrews we find that they were slipping away –

Leaving the elementary principles the writer goes on –

‘For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God (rhema) and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since (while) they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.’

Hebrews 6:1-6

Some explanation –

Rhema - is the small phrase or saying God speaks to us now. It is not the Scripture, though God can, and does, use parts of scripture in this way. Rhema words are not limited to scriptures.

A rhema word from God is an expression of what He will do through us, if we accept it, and act upon it.

Vine’s Expository Dictionary describes rhema - ‘The significance of rhema (as distinct from logos) is exemplified in the expression *‘take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.’* (Ephesians 6:17) Here the reference is not to the whole bible as such, but to the individual scripture (or other saying) which the Spirit brings to our remembrance (or to our mind) in time of need.’

Since (while) – ‘since’ is not in the Greek text. A better translation would be ‘while.’ Restoration is always available through confession (repentance) as found in 1 John 1:9 *‘If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’*

Works (fruit) tested by fire –

‘For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.’ (verse 8)
So the land is not cursed - it is the bad fruit that is burned away - the land survives, albeit fruitless. We are likened to the land - intended to bear good and useful fruit. Bad or useless fruit is burned away, but the land remains.

For us now –

‘Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts,’ 1 Corinthians 14:1

Paul has just been teaching about the spiritual gifts which the Holy Spirit distributes to each believer as He wills. Wonderful powers to bless and help each other and demonstrations of the coming Kingdom of God. (Chapter 12) He then goes on to the well known love chapter (13).

The resulting conclusion is *‘Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts.’*

That is to desire to exercise powers of the age to come.

Chapter 7

Go and do likewise

This is a big challenge. In everyday life do the same things Jesus did. Yes even in secular roles. Indeed especially in secular roles!

This is witness to Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. Just as the disciples were told to do miracles and then declare – ‘the Kingdom of God has come near you.’

How will we do this on earth?

- 1) First- believe that with God nothing is impossible. The angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will be the mother of the Messiah. The Holy Spirit will come upon her and she will bear the Son of God. Her response – ‘for with God nothing is impossible.’ In the Greek text it says ‘*with God no word (rhema) is impossible.*’ So Mary was saying nothing that God says is impossible.
- 2) Second – understand that, as we are to be like Jesus, and, as Jesus did what He saw and heard the Father doing, so in like manner, we are to do what we see and hear the Lord doing.
- 3) Third – receive instructions (rhema) from God and act in faith accordingly. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word (rhema) of God.

- 4) Fourth – dismiss from your thinking your own good ideas and presumptions.

It is straight forward, but as humans we are apt to see difficulties.

Hearing the rhema word of God

Many find this very difficult – some ‘all the time’ and some ‘at times.’ The booklet ‘Hearing God speak’ has much more on this subject. Yet the word (rhema) of God is not far off.

*‘The word [rhema] is near you in your mouth and in your heart.
(That is the word [rhema] of faith which we preach.)’*

Romans 10:8

‘For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.’

Luke 6:45 (see also Matthew 12:34)

Sensitivity

In the age in which we live sensitivity to the Spirit of God has become obscured and thus made difficult by all the demands of life and the demands of one’s flesh.

Sensitivity requires switching one’s focus from the things of this life on earth which surround us, to that which is deep inside and to that which comes as a still small voice.

Sensitivity requires the opposite of ‘telling God what we want and telling God what to do. It is listening to what He has to say. His strategy will always be the best!

Sensitivity requires accepting times when the Lord seems to be silent. We may, and do, long to hear His voice – yet many experience times when the Lord is silent. That is His prerogative. We inherit the promises of God through faith and patience.

Moving in faith

'Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the rhema of God.'
Romans 10:17.

Jesus said, *'If you abide in Me, and My words (rhema) abide in you, you will ask what you desire (thelo, meaning will) and it shall be done for you.'* John 15:7

When we receive a rhema word we have a choice -that is to accept it and act accordingly or to reject it. We could look at this in the light of the parable of the sower. Like seed, the sower spreads the word of the Kingdom of God. What happens depends on where it lands. If we hear a rhema word but cannot or do not accept it – that is hard ground and the word is stolen away. If we hear a rhema word but are too caught up with worldly issues it will bear no fruit. When we hear the word on good ground - that is we understand the word, and the power thereof, and act - then we bring forth good fruit.

There can be many excuses for not acting in accordance with the rhema word - when received in a meeting with others, fear of men, fear of looking foolish, can cause us to keep quiet and thus choke the word.

Let us be encouraged to speak out. It actually does not matter if we get it wrong – nothing will happen. But when we get it right then people get healed, delivered, blessed, problems get resolved. Only the devil would have us keep quiet! Its rather like

learning to ride a bicycle – you have to get on and give it a go regardless of the fact that initially you will wobble and fall off.

Moving mountains

‘If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.’ Matthew 17:20.

In the same way that Mary said, *‘No rhema of God is impossible,’* so here Jesus is confirming the very same thing – nothing is too big for the Lord.

Whatever faces us, in life, in family, in work, in business, in our city, town, village – when we receive the strategy of the Lord through His rhema word, and act accordingly – then it will be done for us, as promised in John 15:7.

‘You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and you do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.’ James 4:2-3

James is encouraging us to focus. Focus on the Kingdom of God. Witness to the Kingdom of God by exercising the powers of that age to come. Demonstrate the Kingdom so we can say, *‘the Kingdom of God has come near you.’*

It is not effort, a heavy load, on our part – it is focus on what the Spirit is bringing to us from Jesus. Paul calls this, being led by the Spirit, in writing to the Romans. (chapter 8) Jesus tells us His yoke is easy and His burden is light. (Matthew 11: 28-30)

It is not trying to establish the Kingdom of heaven – that is where we already dwell. But it is, by following the leading of the Spirit manifesting the Kingdom of God - the coming Kingdom when Jesus will rule personally when He returns.

So we could say -- the Kingdom of heaven is all about the 'geography.' We know it includes earth as we have seen and we know that Paul was caught up to the third heaven. (2 Corinthians 12:2). We know that God abides in the heavens - but of course God is omnipresent, so He is everywhere all the time.

By comparison the Kingdom of God is about active rulership. That is specifically the rulership of Jesus Christ Himself, and His rulership now expressed through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 8

The Kingdom way.

Demonstrating, not establishing, the Kingdom of God.

There is a big difference between the two. Thinking that we can establish the Kingdom of God on earth leads to doctrinal error commonly known as 'Kingdom Now theology.'

It is clear from Jesus words that He will return to establish His Kingdom. It is clear from Revelation, chapter 11, that at a point in time, during what is known as the Great tribulation, Jesus Kingdom is pronounced by the 24 elders. *'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.'*

Revelation 19 – we see Jesus coming back to earth as *'King of Kings and Lord of Lords.'* Coming to rule, coming to establish the Kingdom of God.

The coming Kingdom of God, when Jesus rules and His bride with Him, has wonderful features – it is a time of great abundance, a time of unlimited power. It is a time when once again Israel will be the chief nation on earth – thus fulfilling all the Old Testament promises made by God in the scriptures.

We cannot establish this coming Kingdom.

We can demonstrate the coming Kingdom.

When we examine the New Testament we see Jesus empowering His disciples to demonstrate the coming Kingdom (Luke 10). We also see the apostles demonstrating the coming Kingdom in the book of Acts. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians He urges them –
'Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophecy.' Chapter 14 verse 1

The great commission

'And these signs will follow those who believe; In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.' Mark 16:17-18

Jesus instruction - demonstrate the coming Kingdom of God.

Matthew's gospel.

We made the comment earlier that the gospel of Matthew had particular relevance to the Jews. (That is not to exclude benefit all believers can receive from it by diligently *rightly dividing the word of truth*. 2 Timothy 2:15)

When first written Matthew is the only gospel penned in Hebrew. (Later translated to Greek – we do not have the Hebrew original) This is spoken of by a number of the early church fathers.

The gospel starts with authenticating Jesus as the Messiah. It is essential for Israel to be able to establish that the Messiah is of the line of David. Due to the destruction of the Temple records it is not now possible for Jews to trace and prove their heredity – though it is often indicated by their names.

The gospel has some features which speak loudly to Jews – for example consider the well known Sermon on the Mount. The blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed style reverberates very strongly with Deuteronomy 28. Jews would have taken particular note.

The gospel has some warnings for Jews in particular – *'When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place – then let them in Judea flee*

to the mountains.' Matthew 24:15-16. (Any gentiles would do well to take notice as well!)

The great tribulation is coming – *'and pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been seen since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.'* 24:20

The gospel seems to have instructions for this specific period of time in its rendering of 'the Great Commission.' Here they are told to baptise in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This was not the practice of the early church who baptised into Jesus or into His Name. The reason for the difference is quite clear. Now a born again believer becomes the bride and the body of Christ – but that inheritance closes at the rapture of the church - the bride is complete and the body of Christ reunited with the head in glory.

The body of Christ on earth is told in the 'Great Commission' in Mark - preach, heal the sick, cast out demons.

By comparison, Israel in the tribulation are told to teach and to make disciples – but there is no mention of the power found in Mark.

Maybe, the church would be better placed to demonstrate the coming Kingdom of God if it followed the early church by baptising into Jesus or into His name where there is the promise of power, rather than in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, where there is no promise of power.

Matthew does use the expression 'Kingdom of God' on a few occasions. Notably in chapter 6 verse 33 where he says, '*seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.*' He is in effect saying seek the personal rule of the Messiah over your life – which is quite different from seeking the kingdom of heaven - after all the parables make it clear they (and we) are already dwelling in a part of the Kingdom of heaven called earth.

Matthew's use of the kingdom of God - 6:33, 12:28, 19,24, 21:31, 21:43, - in every case it speaks of the coming under the rule of Jesus, the Messiah.

Conclusion

We have established that the bible references to the 'kingdom of heaven' actually refer to the earth – as being just one part of heaven.

We have established that the 'kingdom of God' refers to the specific rule of Jesus Christ. Whilst He walked the earth He demonstrated His complete dominion over everything. When He returns the kingdom of God will be established in its fullness.

We have established that the true church, that is the born again body of Christ, is not called to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

We have established that the church is called to demonstrate the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 3:10)

We have established, that at the present time, the kingdom of God is demonstrated through the working of the Holy Spirit through believers moving in the powers of the age to come.

Alleluia