

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Matt 3:2 Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near

Matt 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Matt 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt 5:19-20 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matt 7:21 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Matt 8:11-12 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Matt 10:7-8 As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'

Matt 11:11-13 I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

Matt 13:11-12 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

Matt 16:19-20 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matt 18:1-4 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matt 19:12 For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

Matt 19:14-15 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matt 19:23-24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matt 23:13 Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

Kingdom of God

— (Matt 6:33; Mark 1:14,15; Luke 4:43) = "kingdom of Christ" (Matt 13:41; 20:21) = "kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph 5:5) = "kingdom of David" (Mark 11:10) = "the kingdom" (Matt 8:12; 13:19) = "kingdom of heaven" (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 13:41), all denote the same thing under different aspects, viz.: (1) Christ's mediatorial authority, or his rule on the earth; (2) the blessings and advantages of all kinds that flow from this rule; (3) the subjects of this kingdom taken collectively, or the Church.

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In the phrase "the kingdom of God" there are elements of living power which can never pass away.

(1) It expresses the social Power inside of Christianity. A kingdom implies multitude and variety, and, though religion begins with the individual, it must aim at brotherhood, organization and expansion.

(2) It expresses loyalty. However much kings and kingdoms may fail to touch the imagination in an age of the world when many countries have become or are becoming republican, the strength to conquer and to endure will always have to be derived from contact with personalities. God is the king of the kingdom of God, and the Son of God is His vicegerent; and without the love of God the Father and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ no progress can be made with the Christianization of the world.

(3) It keeps alive the truth, suggested by Jesus in the Lord's Prayer, that the doing of the will of God on earth is the one thing needful. This is the true end of all authority in both church and state, and behind all efforts thus directed there is at work the potency of heaven.

(4) It reminds all generations of men that their true home and destiny is heaven. In not a few of Our Lord's own sayings, as has been remarked, our phrase is obviously only a name for heaven; and, while His aim was that the kingdom should be established on earth, He always promised to those aiding in its establishment in this world that their efforts would be rewarded in the world to come. The constant recognition of a spiritual and eternal world is one of the unailing marks of genuine Christianity.

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KINGDOM OF GOD, KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

God's rule of grace in the world, a future period foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament and identified by Jesus as beginning with His public ministry. The kingdom of God is the experience of blessedness, like that of the Garden of Eden, where evil is fully overcome and where those who live in the kingdom know only happiness, peace, and joy. This was the main expectation of the Old Testament prophets about the future.

John the Baptist astonished his hearers when he announced that this expected and hoped-for kingdom was "at hand" in the person of Jesus (Matt 3:2). Jesus repeated this message (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15), but He went even further by announcing clearly that the kingdom was already present in His ministry: "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt 12:28). Jesus was the full embodiment of the kingdom.

The entire ministry of Jesus is understood in relation to this important declaration of the presence of the kingdom. His ethical teachings, for example, cannot be understood apart from the announcement of the kingdom. They are ethics of the kingdom; the perfection to which they point makes no sense apart from the present experience of the kingdom. Participation in the new reality of the kingdom involves a follower of Jesus in a call to the highest righteousness (Matt 5:20).

The acts and deeds of Jesus likewise make sense only in the larger context of proclaiming the kingdom. When John the Baptist asked whether Jesus was "the Coming One," or the Messiah, Jesus answered by recounting some of His deeds of healing ([Matt 11:5](#)). The reference in these words to the expectation of a MESSIAH, especially of the prophet Isaiah ([Isa 29:18-19](#); [35:5-6](#); [61:1](#)), could not have been missed by John. At the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read a passage from [Isa 61](#) about the coming messianic age and then made the astonishing announcement, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" ([Luke 4:21](#)).

All that Jesus did is related to this claim that the kingdom of God has dawned through His ministry. His healings were manifestations of the presence of the kingdom. In these deeds there was a direct confrontation between God and the forces of evil, or Satan and his demons. Summarizing His ministry, Jesus declared, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" ([Luke 10:18](#)). Satan and evil are in retreat now that the kingdom has made its entrance into human history. This is an anticipation of the final age of perfection that will be realized at Christ's return.

Although the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John focus on the present aspect of the kingdom of God, it is also clear that the kingdom will be realized perfectly only at the SECOND COMING. The kingdom that comes through the ministry of Jesus dawns in the form of a mystery. Although it is physically present in the deeds and words of Jesus, it does not overwhelm the world. The judgment of God's enemies is postponed. The kingdom that arrived with Jesus did not include the triumphal victory so longed for by the Jews. It arrived secretly like leaven, inconspicuously like a mustard seed, or like a small pearl of great value that can be hidden in one's pocket ([Matt 13:31-46](#)).

The Jewish people expected the kingdom of God to bring the present evil age to an end. But it arrived mysteriously without doing so. The new reality of the kingdom overlapped the present age, invading it rather than bringing it to an end. The demons reflect this oddity when they ask Jesus, "Have you come here to torment us before the time?" ([Matt 8:29](#)). The future kingdom will bring the present age to an end and usher in the perfect age promised in the prophets. The present kingdom is both an anticipation and a guarantee of this future bliss.

The expression kingdom of God occurs mostly in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The Gospel of John and the epistles of the New Testament refer to the same reality but in different language, using phrases such as eternal life or salvation. The apostle Paul identified the kingdom of God as "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" ([Rom 14:17](#)). Perhaps one reason why he described it this way is that the kingdom of God was a Jewish expression unfamiliar and possibly misleading to Gentiles.

Some interpreters of the Bible have described the phrase kingdom of God as a more comprehensive term referring to both heaven and earth. Likewise, they believe kingdom of God is a more restricted term referring to God's rule on earth, especially in relation to the nation of Israel. In this view Jesus offered the literal kingdom of heaven to Israel, but the Jews refused to accept it. Thus, it has been postponed until the Second Coming of Christ.

A careful study of the gospels, however, shows that the two phrases are used interchangeably. In parallel passages, Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven" while Mark and Luke has "kingdom of God" ([Matt 4:17](#); [Mark 1:15](#); [Luke 13:28](#)). Even in Matthew the two phrases are sometimes used interchangeably, as in [Matt 19:23-24](#), where they are used one after the other in the same connection.

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