

The Kingdom of God

Introduction

I am convinced that in the coming years the message of the Kingdom of God is going to become central to everything that is occurring in the world. This message is a game changer. It is the definition of how Jesus changed reality for the sake of those that believe upon Him.

Throughout the gospels many references are made to the kingdom. In spite of the frequency of direct references, the message of the kingdom has remained among the most misunderstood concepts in the Bible. Of those that purport to understand it, few will explain it the same way, although more recently this has been changing. Nonetheless, among the majority of Christ followers this concept remains a hazy, non-concrete term of little importance. This book will change this.

The purpose of this work is not only to definitively articulate what the kingdom of God is, but also to expound upon what it means for us. This message is infinitely important, and the power of this message cannot be ignored. For Christians, this message will change the way we engage our God. For the world, this message will prepare the way for the return of Jesus Christ. It is the *gospel of the kingdom* that must go forth as a witness to all nations before the end will come (Matthew 24:14).

What you will experience from one page to the next will draw you into realms you never knew existed. It will excite, challenge, and spark a passion in you that will be insuppressible. As you come to understand the meaning of the kingdom, the power that you feel rising up in you will pull you into great acts of faith. You will never look at Christianity the same. The message of the kingdom will utterly destroy artificial boundaries that have been imposed upon your life. Everything that is impossible will come into the realm of the achievable, and you will never be able to think the same.

With that said, take a journey with me into one of the most liberating messages to be found in the Bible: The Kingdom of God.

Chapter 1 - What is a Kingdom?

It is fitting to begin this book with a very straightforward answer to the question of the hour. Just what is a kingdom? Unless we are able to define what a kingdom is, we can never define what the kingdom of God is. The truth is that a kingdom is a kingdom, whether it belongs to God, man, or the devil. The definition of the word remains consistent. Before we begin to address anything else we must set a proper foundation for our study. *Simply put, a kingdom is a government.*

While you may be thinking that my name may as well be "Captain Obvious", this point is so important that I believe that it deserves an entire chapter. Christianity has been viewed as many things throughout history. As a matter of fact, even today Christianity is not viewed by everyone the same way. Some people see it as a social club. Others see it as a non-profit organization. Some people look at it as an institution to be run like a cult. Still others see it as no more than a spiritual path or one of many religions to be embraced. For many it amounts to little more than one of a plethora of philosophies.

Christianity is none of these. It is a government. When Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, He came preaching the good news of God's government. This point alone is incredible revelation for many people. Most individuals that have committed their lives to Jesus Christ have not considered that they were also entering the government of God during their salvation experience. Moreover, few have made the connection that when Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom he was in effect declaring the good news of the spiritual implementation of the rule of God's government.

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." (Matthew 4:23)

The word gospel simply means good news. We must understand that when we see Jesus preaching, he never once preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. The good news of His death, burial and resurrection had not yet occurred. However, what he did preach was the good news of God's government which He established everywhere he went. It is the onset of the government of God that evicts demons and sickness. The gospel of the kingdom is the good news that the kingdom of God, which manifests from another realm entirely, is overtaking the fallen realities in the earth. Signs and wonders must follow.

A Kingdom is not a Social Club

As we begin the process of breaking free from our erroneous view points of the Christian faith things, by necessity, start to change quickly. For instance, in a social club things are very casual. Ideas are up for debate. If two people say they want pizza and five people say they want tacos, well, tacos it is! In a social club things are run according to majority rule and everything is relative. Relativity is the rule of the land. Opinions are all weighed on the same scale.

I am amazed that people think they can do the same thing with Christianity. They actually think that God runs things like a social club. If God says no, but two of us say yes, yes it is! I can't tell you the number of Christians I have met that think it is okay to have sex outside of marriage. It's as if they believe that the precepts and edicts of God are something to be debated—that the Word of God is to be applied selectively according to our personal preferences.

To end the debate on the issue I just raised let me give you the term that the Bible uses to refer to sex outside of marriage. The term is fornication. Here is what the Bible says:

"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but **he that committeth fornication sinneth** against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18)

Case and point: fornication is sin. Period! In case you were wondering, homosexuality and bestiality can be grouped right in. Fornication is any kind of sex outside of a marital context. I have heard all kinds of excuses, justifications, and blatant lies in order for people to get around this issue. Unfortunately, from a biblical standpoint it is inarguable. Fornication is sin, and if you are fornicating, you are sinning. Any questions?

Getting back to the main point, a kingdom is a government. Why does this have anything to do with Christianity? Becoming a Christian means gaining citizenship and access to the kingdom of God. If a kingdom is a government, then the kingdom of God is the government of God. This means that Christianity is not to be understood as a social club, a not-for-profit organization, or a cult. As simple as this point may seem, this fundamental paradigm shift changes almost everything about the way we

should approach Christianity.

Our Constitution

This leads us to the idea of constitution. Every government is established upon founding documents. Founding documents allow for the establishment of a society and a government through which the society will be directed. Built into the founding documents will be the values, ideals, and goals that the government intends to accomplish on behalf of those subject to it. In the preamble to the constitution of the United States, these items can easily be picked out.

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

— The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America

The Bible contains God's Word to us. Properly interpreted, the Bible actually serves as a type of constitution. The edicts and precepts it communicates are not up for debate. They are law! They are the values, ideals, and goals that God intends to establish through His kingdom. Pause and consider the weight of this concept for a few seconds. Have you ever considered that the Bible isn't just an important book, but that it is actually intended to serve as the founding documents of God's very kingdom!

The Bible functions differently than most founding documents. For instance, unlike the constitution of the United States that is interpreted by a court of elected officials (the Supreme Court) the Bible is interpreted by the Holy Spirit. He leads us and guides us into all truth. Apart from His validation, our teachings and theories have no power and are ultimately fruitless and misguided. They become illegal interpretations of our constitution.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13)

False teachings are illegal. False teachings are destructive. False teachings lead people away from the truth of God. False teachings keep people in bondage. The list of severe consequences related to false teaching is extensive. Is it any wonder that teachings which are not inspired by the Spirit of God are illegal? Many of us do not think in such drastic terminology, but sometimes it is helpful to have a sobering reality check. No one has perfect theology, but as members of God's kingdom it is our responsibility to remain teachable. When we realize that we have embraced false teachings and illegal doctrines we must be humble enough to lay them down. Furthermore, if we are entrusted as teachers of God's word, we must always remember that our judgment is more severe.

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." (2 Peter 2:1)

“Not many [of you] should become teachers (self-constituted censors and reprovers of others), my brethren, for you know that we [teachers] will be judged by a higher standard *and* with greater severity [than other people; thus we assume the greater accountability and the more condemnation].”
(James 3:1 AMP)

Suffice it to say that there are, and have always been, many illegal interpretations of our constitution. Beginning in the early church there were sects that went out from among them teaching illegal interpretations such as the Gnostics, the Judaizers, and the Nicolaitans. Today we have cults like Jehovah’s Witnesses, The Latter Day Saints of Jesus Christ (Mormon’s), and countless splinter groups teaching damnable heresies. When our constitution is interpreted illegally, it leads people to do and believe things that take them out of alignment with their King. When people are out of alignment with their King, they cease to maintain the benefits of their kingdom citizenship.

Inheriting the Kingdom

On this note it is important to point out a couple of passages that have caused readers quite a bit of trouble. Certain passages make mention of us “inheriting the kingdom”. While many have assumed they deal with qualifications for "salvation", there is a significant difference between “salvation by grace through faith” and "inheriting the kingdom”. For those of you that may be picking up this book with no former exposure to Christianity, salvation means that one receives Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior by believing in Him with their hearts and confessing His lordship with their mouths (Romans 10:9). For further explanation about this issue please refer to the appendix. Your eternity

hinges on this! Nonetheless, the point is that receiving salvation is different from inheriting the kingdom.

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not **inherit the kingdom of God**? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not **inherit the kingdom of God**." (Galatians 5:19-21)

Inheritance always deals with the issue of access. When we inherit property from a dead relative for instance, we gain access to wealth that was appointed to us, but until the death of the giver remained inaccessible. Jesus died so that we could inherit the kingdom, but there is a difference between giving and receiving. I can give a person a gift and wrap it in beautiful paper. However, until the person takes the box (or what have you) and opens it they have not received the gift. Christians often choose not to access their inheritance via willful sin. It is as if the lawyer hands them the papers to sign so that they can begin to enjoy the inheritance but they refuse to sign. Willful sin results in the rejection of one's available inheritance.

Inheritance deals with the issue of access. In other words, those who participate in these sins (fornication, envy, murder, etc.) sacrifice their access to the God dimension (another term I use in reference to the kingdom of God). Although God will not forsake them (Hebrews 13:5), they have established a barrier between them and God. This brings balance to passages that has left some with a great deal of confusion. I have heard it preached that sins like envy can cause a person to actually lose their salvation because the lists found in the above passages. This type of interpretation is misguided and leads to legalism and fear. Our salvation is secure, but our interaction with the kingdom of God can be filtered by sin in our lives.

This is why we must live lives of repentance and holiness in order to participate in our inheritance (1 John 1:9). In order to make my next statement allow me to define my terms. I often will substitute the terms "kingdom of God" and "God dimension" to give readers a word picture. People often associate the word dimension with higher realities, which is exactly what we are discussing here. This being said, if sin filters our access to the God dimension, repentance is what removes the filter. Regular repentance is extremely important to the life of the Christian! It allows us to walk out a lifestyle of personal holiness.

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14)

This passage highlights the importance of right relationships in order to experience the God dimension. We are to follow peace with all men. This means we must be ready to forgive all offence. This means we must be willing to pray for our enemies. Furthermore, we are instructed to embrace

holiness. To be holy means to be set apart or sanctified. A holy lifestyle is a lifestyle that sets one apart for service to the King. As it is written, without this we cannot see God.

When sin has been dealt with we will see God and experience His kingdom freely. Our access to the God dimension will also come easily and more powerfully. When these things are not in place, though Jesus is in our midst, the presence and atmosphere that God attempts to establish will be severely hindered. This is because it is filtered. Jesus wants to introduce the atmosphere and characteristics of the kingdom of heaven into our time-space. At this juncture we are ready to progress further into our journey towards conceptualizing the kingdom.

Chapter 2 – What is the Kingdom of God?

We have defined a kingdom as a government. Thus the Kingdom of God is the government of God. We have already taken this one step further and basically stated that the kingdom of God is the realm in which God is king. Now we are going to resolve some issues involving terminology. The rest of this chapter is adapted from my book *Kingdom Government and the Promise of Sheep Nations*.

One of the issues that makes discussing the subject of the Kingdom difficult is the fact that there has been a lot of bad teaching about it in the past. One of the ways this subject has been taught wrongly involves the assumption that the scripture, particularly the gospels, are contrasting two kingdoms. One is the Kingdom of God and the other is the Kingdom of Heaven. This nonsense has, as one can imagine, skewed the interpretation of many kingdom parables, thus leading people astray from truly understanding the implications of God's kingdom. This fires me up! Therefore this chapter is early enough in this work to dispel this false premise.

Establishing the False Premise

It has been suggested by many theologians that a distinction is to be made between two kingdoms. It has been said that the *kingdom of heaven* includes the sphere of Christian profession (both saved and unsaved) while the *kingdom of God* specifically deals with the true believers. This chapter will establish that this is a false premise. It will prove that we can conclude the matter as follows: ONE KINGDOM, ONE KING.

In order to prove this we are going to systematically compare and contrast passages from the synoptic gospels that interchange these terms. This is extremely important because if we allow ourselves to fall into the trap of defining the *kingdom of heaven* and *the kingdom of God* as separate kingdoms we will ultimately lose the power of the kingdom message. Furthermore, it will become impossible to properly address the parables dealing with the kingdom because we will approach them out of a wrong paradigm. Wrong paradigms will almost always lead to wrong conclusions.

John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Kingdom

We will begin our journey with John the Baptist. John was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He went forth to proclaim the coming of the Messiah. His message was straightforward and to the point. This is what he said:

“Repent ye: for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2)

John the Baptist was, in essence, preaching the message of the kingdom. Isn't it interesting that he wasn't preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ? He said that the reason for repentance was to make way for the coming of God's kingdom. We find that this was also the message that Jesus preached. Jesus didn't preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, He preached the kingdom.

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

This is where we will find our first harmonization of terms. In the exact same depiction of Jesus, Luke explains the message that Jesus preached:

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God** is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

If we are to believe that the *kingdom of heaven* and *the kingdom of God* are two different kingdoms we run into a problem. In essence, the question forcibly arises: Which kingdom did Jesus preach? Did he preach *the kingdom of heaven* or *the kingdom of God*? Furthermore, which kingdom was near? If they were both "near" or "at hand," where does the Bible explain the mechanics of how Jesus separately manifested two kingdoms through His ministry? Of course, when we understand them to be

the same kingdom these questions disappear and we are left with one simple truth: ONE KINGDOM, ONE KING. Let us look at the next example.

The Poor and the Kingdom

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is **the kingdom of heaven.**" (Matthew 5:3)

"And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is **the kingdom of God.**" (Luke 6:20)

During the famous Sermon on the Mount Jesus set out to change the way the world thought. This monologue is full of many of the most profound sayings ever recorded by history. In the midst of everything that Jesus explains, He says that the poor are blessed because "theirs is the kingdom." In Matthew's account the poor inherit *the kingdom of heaven*. In Luke's account the poor inherit *the kingdom of God*. If the kingdoms are different, which kingdom do the poor inherit? The synoptic gospels have again blurred the distinction between *the kingdom of God* and *the kingdom of heaven*. Why? The fact of the matter is that they are the same kingdom: ONE KINGDOM, ONE KING.

The Patriarchs and the Kingdom

Consider this question: Which kingdom did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob retire to, *the kingdom of God* or *the kingdom of heaven*?

“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.**” (Matthew 8:11)

“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see **Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,** and all the prophets, **in the kingdom of God,** and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 13:28-29)

Do Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have the burden of being eternally caught between two kingdoms? No. Again, we see that the same kingdom is being referred to as both *the kingdom of heaven* and *the kingdom of God*. The synoptic gospel writers do not maintain a consistent division between these two terms. Instead they treat *the kingdom of God* and *the kingdom of heaven* as the same thing: ONE KINGDOM, ONE KING.

The Disciples Preach the Kingdom

After three examples an undeniable pattern begins to arise. However, there are many more instances of overlapping of kingdom terminology throughout the synoptic gospels. For instance, when Jesus sent out His disciples, He commissioned them to preach the kingdom.

“And as ye go, preach, saying, **The kingdom of heaven** is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.” (Matthew 10:7-8)

“Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach **the kingdom of God**, and to heal the sick.” (Luke 9:1-2)

As we can straightforwardly see, Jesus is depicted in the same scene by both gospel writers. They are not writing about two different people named Jesus that said two different things at two different times. They are telling the same story, which is the reason why these gospels are called synoptic. In this scene the terms *kingdom of God* and *kingdom of heaven* are interchanged because as far as the gospels are concerned, both terms are referring to the same kingdom. ONE KINGDOM, ONE KING.

Many More Examples

To avoid being overly repetitive the following table will illustrate additional passages that harmonize the terms *kingdom of heaven* and *kingdom of God*.

Kingdom of heaven	Kingdom of God
Matthew 11:11-12	Luke 7:28
Matthew 13:11	Mark 4:11, Luke 8:10
Matthew 18:3-4, Matthew 19:14	Mark 10:14-15, Luke 18:16-17
Matthew 19:23-24	Mark 10:23-25, Luke 18:24-25
Matthew 13:31	Mark 4:30-31

The Kingdom of the Son

Now that we have established that *the kingdom of God* and *the kingdom of heaven* are two terminologies describing the same kingdom, we can touch on a few other potential difficulties. Besides being referred to as the *kingdom of God* and the *kingdom of heaven*, we also find terms such as *the kingdom of the Son* and *the kingdom of the Father*. Are these additional terms describing the same kingdom as well? Consider the following passages:

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see **the Son of man coming in his kingdom.**” (Matthew 16:27-28)

“For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see **the kingdom of God.**” (Luke 9:26-27)

These two passages give us the evidence that we need to accurately conclude that *the kingdom of God* is synonymous with *the kingdom of the Son*. Moreover, since the case has been made that the *kingdom of God* is synonymous with the *kingdom of heaven*, it follows that *the kingdom of the Son* is synonymous with *the kingdom of heaven*. In short: ONE KINGDOM, ONE KING. This is very important, because the whole message of the kingdom hinges on the proper understanding of *the kingdom of the Son*.

“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into **the kingdom of his dear Son**” (Colossians 1:13)

When we understand that the only way into the *kingdom of the Son* is through spiritual translation, we set the parameters necessary for properly interpreting kingdom parables. The only kingdom parables that aren't exclusive to the true born-again church deal with the time-frame after the return of Jesus Christ. It will be at that time that the kingdoms of this world have already become God's kingdoms according to Revelation 11:15. Therefore, the wicked will have to be cast out of the world. The only parables that require this understanding are the *parable of the wheat and the tares* and the *parable of the net*, both found in Matthew 13.

The Kingdom of the Father

In any case, in order to address *the kingdom of the Father* we must keep something in mind. The fact of matter is that as Christians we serve the triune God. We do not have three God's, we have one, and Jesus makes this blatantly clear.

“I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30)

When we try to differentiate *the kingdom of the Father* from *the kingdom of the Son*, we will run into problems because they are the same God. Nonetheless, certain passages seem to hint at the idea

that the Father and the Son have different kingdoms. It can be deduced from these passages that the Son's kingdom comes first and the Father's kingdom comes second.

“Then cometh the end, **when he [Jesus] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father**; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. **For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.**” (1 Corinthians 15:24-26)

According to this passage Jesus must reign in His kingdom until death has been destroyed. According to Revelation 20:14 death isn't destroyed until the end of the millennial reign which is the thousand year period during which Jesus rules earth with a rod of iron (Revelation 19:15). Therefore, it has been concluded that Jesus brings His kingdom first, and then His Father's kingdom comes after the millennial reign is over. However, the fact of the matter is that the Father and the Son are one. Moreover, *the kingdom of the Father* is actually made synonymous with *the kingdom of God* by the gospel writers.

“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in **my Father's kingdom.**” (Matthew 26:28-29)

“Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in **the kingdom of God.**” (Mark 14:25)

One Kingdom, One King

Since the gospel writers clearly exchange the term *the Father's kingdom* for *the kingdom of God*; and since it's been proven that *the kingdom of God* is synonymous with both *the kingdom of heaven* and *the kingdom of the Son*, we are back to our original conclusion: ONE KINGDOM, ONE KING. In order to solve the potential issue created by 1 Corinthians 15, we can simply conclude that the primary person of the Godhead manifesting as King will shift. The kingdom stays the same, and the members of it are also the same.

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