

Eternal Life in the Kingdom of Heaven

By Jim Myers

BHC Guidelines & Models

#1 Explorer's Pledge

My belief system will be large enough to include all facts, open enough to be questioned and examined, and flexible enough to change if errors or new facts are discovered.

#2 Words

A word consists of symbols or sounds with an attached bundle of associations. Those associations are a product of the source's culture, time period, locations and personal experiences.

#3 Communicating

A communications experience consists of a Source (writer or speaker) and Receptor (reader or hearer). Our goal is to identify the Source's meanings of words.

#4 The Bible

"The Bible" is a name many books share, but they are not all the same. Some have different books, while others have different words in the books they share.

#5 Biblical Heritages

Biblical Heritages are the histories of institutions that created biblical canons or make claims of divine authority linked to Bibles.

#6 The Brain

The brain continually rewrites its circuitry as it processes information to reflect the world around it and optimize its efficacy within it. It generates the individual realities humans experience as life.

Beliefs are meme-models created by the brain.

We are discussing Yeshua's parable about the *Great Day of Judgment* in Matthew 25:31-46.

*Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit **the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world**: for I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me' . . . and **the righteous will go away into eternal life.**"*

In the teachings of Yeshua, "the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" is what he also called the "Kingdom of Heaven."

The righteous will go away into eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Therefore, understanding what "**Kingdom of Heaven**" meant to Yeshua is very important. In this context, "Heaven" is a **euphemistic circumlocution** for "God."¹ Observant Jews do not pronounce **YHVH**, the Hebrew name of God. They use **euphemistic circumlocutions**² to avoid "profaning the name of God," which is one of the *Ten Commandments* (Exodus 20:7).

*"You shall not take the name of the **LORD** your God in vain."*

In the commandment above, **ADONAI** (Lord) is **euphemistic circumlocution** for **YHVH**. Two other well-known options are **HASHEM** (*The Name*) and **SHAMAYIM** (*Heaven*). "**Heaven**" is used in 1 Maccabees 4:10-11.

*"And now, let us cry to **Heaven**, to see whether He will favor us and remember His covenant with our ancestors and crush this army before us today. Then all the Gentiles will know that there is **One who redeems and saves Israel.**"*

Kingdom of Heaven and **Kingdom of God** mean the same thing. Observant Jews would use *Kingdom of Heaven*, while others (Jews and Gentiles) use *Kingdom of God*. This brings us to the next question.

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Where will the Kingdom of Heaven **be located**
after the Great Day of Judgment?

Dr. Bart D. Ehrman provides the answer in his very informative book, *Heaven and Hell: A History of the Afterlife*. (Underlining and italics have been added to highlight important points.)

“Toward the very end of the Old Testament period, some Jewish thinkers came to believe this future “resurrection” would apply not to the fortunes of the nation but to individuals. If God was just, surely he could not allow the suffering of the righteous to go unrequited. There would be a future day of judgment, when God would literally bring his people, each of them, back to life. This would be a resurrection of the dead: those who had sided with God would be returned to their bodies to live forevermore.”

Jesus of Nazareth inherited this view and forcefully proclaimed it. Those who did God’s will would be rewarded at the end, **raised from the dead to live forever in a glorious kingdom here on earth**. Those opposed to God would be punished by being annihilated out of existence. For Jesus this was to happen very soon.”³

In the teachings of Yeshua, the **Kingdom of Heaven**
is **not located in the place Christians today call “Heaven.”**

The **righteous** in the parable of the Great Day of Judgment
will live forever in a glorious kingdom here on earth.

Who are the **“righteous”**? They are the ones called a **TZADIYQ** in Isaiah 58 – the ones that did **acts of (TZEDAQAH)**. What were those acts in Yeshua’s parable? They were acts that were **TOV**.

*Actions that are **TOV** protect lives, preserve lives,
make lives more functional, and increase the quality of life.*

The specific acts in the parable were giving food to the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, giving shelter to a stranger, giving clothes to the naked, visiting the sick, and going to those in prison.

*I don’t know about you, but I never heard that **“salvation message”**
at my church and I never preached it!*

However, let me remind you that Yeshua was teaching a parable, not delivering a **“salvation message.”**

Jewish teachers used parables for specific purposes (**the purposes of parables**). Now put yourself in the shoes of those hearing the parable that day and answer these questions.

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1. *Does it prompt me to see the world in a different way?*
2. *Does it challenge me to look into hidden aspects of my own life?*
3. *Did it bring to the surface unasked questions or reveal answers I have always known but refused to acknowledge?*
4. *Does it remind, provoke, confront, or disturb me, so I will focus on the actions I need to take.*⁴

¹ *The Sage From Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus' Genius* By David Flusser; © 2007 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI; p. 77.

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circumlocution>

³ *Heaven and Hell: A History of the Afterlife* by Bart D. Ehrman © 2020; Simon & Schuster, New York, NY; p. xxi.

⁴ *Short Stories By Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* By Amy-Jill Levine © 2014; HarperCollins Publishers, Broadway, NY; p. 4.