

A STUDY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

INTRODUCTION

A. Overview

1. Matthew 6:9-10, *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven.*
2. Examination of the terms *kingdom of God* and *kingdom of heaven*.
3. Study of the Kingdom
4. Justification for Premillennial Dispensationalism

B. Usage of terms

1. Dispensationalism: a distinguishable administration in the outworking of God's purpose.
2. Premillennialism: Jesus Christ will return bodily to the earth and establish His earthly kingdom for the duration of one thousand years. The promises made to Israel, as a nation, will be literally fulfilled by God at that time.
3. Kingdom of God: 71 times in New Testament; in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians.
4. Kingdom of Heaven: 31 times in New Testament; all in the Gospel of Matthew
5. Biblical meanings of *heaven*
 - a. The upper air where the birds fly, Matthew 8:20; 24:30
 - b. The region in which the stars reside, Acts 7:42; Hebrews 11:12
 - c. The abode of Christ's human nature, the scene of the special manifestation of divine glory, and of the eternal blessedness of the saints, 1 Peter 3:22, 2 Corinthians 12:2; Hebrews 9:24, *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, [which are] the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*
 - d. Figurative terms
 - 1) Paradise, Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7
 - 2) Heavenly Jerusalem, Galatians 4:26; Revelation 3:12
 - 3) Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22; Matthew 8:11
 - e. Revealed blessings of Heaven
 - 1) Perfect deliverance from sin and all its evil consequences, Revelation 7:16, 17; 21:3-4, 27, *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither [whatsoever] worketh abomination, or [maketh] a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*
 - 2) Perfection of our nature, 1 Corinthians 13:9-12; 15:45-49; 1 John 3:2, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*
 - 3) Communion with the God the Father, Jesus Christ and all saints, 1 John 1:3; Revelation 3:21; 21:3-5; Matthew 5:8; 2 Corinthians 3:18; John 17:24, *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*

C. Unique perspective of each Gospel

1. Matthew: written for a Jewish audience; emphasized Christ as teacher and quoted frequently from OT.
2. Mark: written for a Roman audience; emphasized Christ as servant.
3. Luke: written for a predominantly Greek audience; stresses the universal need for Christ.
4. John: written for the church in general; completing the other Gospel accounts.

KINGDOM

- A. Examination of the terms *kingdom of heaven* and *kingdom of God*
1. Some view the terms as different events
 - a. Charles Ryrie, *Some dispensationalists have tied the "kingdom of Heaven" to the earthly, millennial kingdom and the "kingdom of God" to the eternal, spiritual kingdom.*
 - b. John F. Walvoord, *the distinction as usually presented is between the kingdom of heaven as an outward sphere of profession and the kingdom of God as a sphere of reality including only the elect.*
 - c. Stanley Toussaint, *Some who hold to the contingency of the coming of Christ's kingdom to this earth maintain a distinction between the terms kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven. It is said that because the kingdom of heaven is likened to the lump of dough with leaven (Matthew 13:33) it contains hypocrites as well as genuine believers in that leaven portrays evil. On the other hand, the kingdom of God is composed only of the saved because John 3:3 says only the born again enter the kingdom of God. However, Matthew 18:3 also excludes hypocrites from the kingdom of heaven. Only the genuinely converted may enter this kingdom.*
 2. Similar usage of both phrases with context determining appropriate meaning.
 - a. Both are used for the eternal kingdom, Matthew 6:33 with 18:3-6; Matthew 7:21 with Mark 10:14, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*
 - b. Both are used for the future millennial kingdom, Matthew 3:2; 5:3, 10; 6:10; Mark 9:1, 47; 14:25; 21:31. Luke 19:1 with Matthew 4:17, *And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.*
 - c. Both are used for the present form of the kingdom, Matthew 13:11 with Luke 8:10, *He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.*
 3. Both phrases are interchangeable
 - a. *Kingdom of heaven* is a substitute for *Kingdom of God*
 - 1) Matthew used the term in deference to the Jewish audience
 - 2) The name of God is sacred to the Jew as seen in terms Yahweh and Jehovah (**overhead**).
 - b. Exceptions to the exclusive use of *kingdom of heaven* in Matthew
 - 1) Matthew 6:33, *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*
 - a) *Heaven* probably not in the original text.
 - b) Jesus was addressing His disciples.
 - 2) Matthew 12:28, *But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.*
 - a) Rebuke of Pharisees
 - b) Identification of Spirit and kingdom to God.
 - 3) Matthew 19:24, *And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*
 - a) Rebuke of Pharisees.
 - b) Jesus was addressing His disciples.
 - 4) Matthew 21:31, 43, *Whether of them twain did the will of [his] father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*
 4. Non-dispensationalists have declared that dispensationalism is based on a perceived distinction between *kingdom of heaven* and *kingdom of God*.
 - a. The issue is not a distinction between those phrases but whether or not the Church is the Kingdom: J. Dwight Pentecost, *If the present form of the kingdom is not the Church and if the future form is the Davidic kingdom on earth, then dispensational premillennialism is the only answer...Therefore, when a dispensationalist says that the kingdom is postponed, he is speaking of the Davidic kingdom, but he also affirms the continuing presence of the universal kingdom and the spiritual rule of God in individual hearts today.*

- b. Difficulties created by identifying the Church as the Kingdom
 - 1) Based upon Augustine's *City of God*, the church of the Middle Ages assumed absolute authority in teaching and dispensing salvation grace.
 - 2) Building the kingdom through the church and therefore forgetting that the literal establishment of the Kingdom is future.
- c. Present relation of the Church to the kingdom
 - 1) The Church is a mystery of the kingdom, Romans 11:25, *So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.*
 - 2) The Church, as citizens of the kingdom, enjoys certain blessings of that kingdom today, Hebrews 6:5, *and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,*
 - 3) The Church is called to be kingdom ambassadors for Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:20, *So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

B. A study of the Kingdom

- 1. Definition: the all-embracing program of God's divine salvation history, Robert Saucy.
- 2. Aspects
 - a. God's rule over all creation
 - 1) Creator of heaven and earth, Psalm 95:4-5, *In his hand [are] the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills [is] his also. The sea [is] his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry [land].*
 - 2) God sits on a throne, Ezekiel 1:26-28; 1 Kings 22:19; Psalm 103:19, *The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.*
 - 3) Universal King
 - a) Of the whole world, Psalm 103:19b; 1 Chronicles 29:11, *Thine, O LORD, [is] the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all [that is] in the heaven and in the earth [is thine]; thine [is] the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.*
 - b) Of all the kingdoms of men, Psalm 47:2, 7; 2 Kings 19:15, *And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest [between] the cherubims, thou art the God, [even] thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.*
 - 4) Eternal King, Daniel 4:3, 4; 74:12; 93:2; Exodus 15:18; Psalm 145:13, *Thy kingdom [is] an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion [endureth] throughout all generations.*
 - b. The Messianic kingdom to be established on earth, Matthew 6:10, *Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*
- 3. Stages
 - a. Initiated upon covenant promises made with Abraham.
 - b. Appearance of Jesus Christ.
 - c. Establishment of the Church.
 - d. Millennial Kingdom.
 - e. Final delivery of kingdom to the Father, 1 Corinthians 15:24-26, *Then [cometh] the end, when he 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.*

C. Justification for premillennial dispensationalism

- 1. Introduction
 - a. Other systems
 - 1) Amillennialism: the kingdom is spiritually active through the Church.
 - 2) Postmillennialism: the kingdom will be established once the Church has transformed the world.
 - b. Basic premises of premillennialism
 - 1) Unconditional nature of covenants God made to the nation of Israel
 - 2) Literal (historical-grammatical) interpretation of Scripture.

2. Key biblical covenants dealing with the Kingdom

- a. Abrahamic Covenant: Genesis 12:1-3, *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*
- 1) Land: God promised the nation of Israel a homeland.
 - 2) Seed: Abraham would be the father of a multitude of nations.
 - 3) Blessing: in Abraham, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
- b. Palestinian Covenant, Genesis 15:18-21, *In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.*
- 1) The extent of territory given by God to Israel.
 - 2) Israel has never entirely possessed these borders.
- c. Davidic Covenant, 2 Samuel 7:8-16, *Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great [men] that [are] in the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, And as since the time that I commanded judges [to be] over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took [it] from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.*
- 1) To make David's name great (9)
 - 2) A permanent homeland for Israel (10)
 - 3) Peace (10-11)
 - 4) A house built for God (13)
 - 5) Kingdom to be established by God and the throne to be forever (12-13, 16)
- d. Conclusions
- 1) Blessings made to the nation of Israel
 - 2) The promises are unconditional, Genesis 17:7, *And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*
 - 3) The promises have not been fulfilled and await a future fulfillment, note Luke 1:31-33, *And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.*

3. The Millennium

a. The time when God fulfills his unconditional promises to the nation of Israel.

1) The kingdom promised David will be instituted, Revelation 19:11-16, *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him [was] called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes [were] as a flame of fire, and on his head [were] many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he [was] clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies [which were] in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on [his] vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

2) Israel will possess all the land promised her.

3) Jesus Christ, the rightful King, will rule in perfect peace.

4) It will be a one thousand year reign, Revelation 20:1-6, *And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received [his] mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This [is] the first resurrection. Blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

b. The promises are fulfilled literally.

1) The Church need not be *spiritual Israel* because this is the literal fulfillment of God's promises.

2) All unfulfilled promises will be fulfilled literally just as all Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled literally.

4. Premillennialism in the Early Church

a. Clement of Rome (ca. 30-95), *Let us then wait for the kingdom of God from hour to hour in love and righteousness, seeing that we know not the day of the appearing of God* (Second Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12).

b. Papias (80-163), He wrote that after the resurrection of the dead will come the millennium *when the personal reign of Christ will be established on the earth* (fragment VI, quoted by Irenaeus and Eusebius).

c. Justin Martyr (ca. 100-164), *But I and whoever are on all points right-minded Christians know that there will be resurrection of the dead and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and the others declare...And, further, a certain man with us, named John, one of the Apostles of Christ, predicted by a revelation that was made to him that those who believed in our Christ would spend a thousand years in Jerusalem, and thereafter the general, or to speak briefly, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place* (Dialogue with Trypho, chapters 80-81).

d. Tertullian (ca. 160-220), *We do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth...it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem* (Against Marcion, 3.25).

e. Hippolytus (died 236), He expounded Daniel 2, 7, and 8 as teaching a literal reign of Christ on the earth (A treatise on Christ and Antichrist).

f. Lactantius (240-330), *About the same time also the prince of the devils, who is the contriver of all evils, shall be bound with chains, and shall be imprisoned during the thousand years of the heavenly rule in which righteousness shall reign in the world, so that he may contrive no evil against the people of God* (Epitome of the Divine Institutes, 7, 24).

CONCLUSION

- A. The terms *kingdom of heaven* and *kingdom of God* are interchangeable.
- B. The Church is not *spiritual Israel*.
- C. God will fulfill His unconditional promises to the nation of Israel.
- D. The visible kingdom of God will be established on the earth.