

## DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE KINGDOM (I)

In the New Testament there are [three major books on the kingdom: Matthew, Hebrews, and Revelation](#). The book of Hebrews starts and ends with the kingdom. Hebrews 1:8 says, “Of the Son, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of uprightness is [the scepter of Your kingdom](#).’” Then 12:28 says, “Therefore receiving an [unshakable kingdom](#).” Revelation also begins with the kingdom: “I John, your brother and fellow [partaker in the tribulation and kingdom](#) and endurance in Jesus” (1:9). Revelation continues with the church in the reality of the kingdom and ends with the kingdom in its manifestation.

The kingdom revealed in the last chapters of Revelation is the consummation of the enjoyment of Christ. It is in this book that we are told [we need to eat Christ as our life supply](#). He is the tree of life and the living water. In chapter 2 He is the hidden manna, and in chapter 3 He is the feast. At the end of the book of Revelation, a call is issued: “[The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills, take the water of life freely](#)” (22:17). How can we realize and experience the kingdom? It is not by learning the doctrines about the kingdom but [by eating and drinking Christ](#). Eventually, the eating and drinking of Christ will consummate in the kingdom. This is because [the kingdom is simply the enlargement of Christ](#). Christ will not be enlarged by “mushrooming” overnight. [The enlargement of Christ is by our daily eating. We eat of Him day by day and bit by bit. The more we eat and drink of Him, the more He spreads within us. The more He spreads within us, the more the kingdom is manifested.](#) Many Christians consider that the kingdom is only a kind of dispensation or sphere. But we must see the life aspect of the kingdom. Remember the stone in Daniel 2, which is not cut with human hands but eventually becomes a great mountain. Christ as a piece of stone will become a great mountain. And Christ as a seed of the kingdom will become the harvest of the kingdom. [The way for us to realize Christ as the kingdom is to eat and drink of Him as the tree of life and the water of life. These two items, the tree of life and the water of life, will be our portion for eternity.](#)

What is the church life? [The church life is just a life of eating and drinking of Christ all the day long. It is not a life of doctrines, regulations, and forms.](#) The church life is a life of eating of Christ daily. Have you eaten of Christ today? The book of Revelation shows the kingdom in its ultimate consummation of the enjoyment of eating Christ.

In all the previous chapters we have mainly seen the life side of the kingdom. Now we must see the doctrinal side. In order to be balanced, we need not only life but also doctrine. The verses in the Scripture Reading indicate ten different kinds of kingdoms. First is [the kingdom of the heavens](#). **Matthew 3:2** says, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.”

In **Matthew 12:28** the Lord Jesus said, “If I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then [the kingdom of God](#) has come upon you.” This is not the kingdom of the heavens but the kingdom of God. Matthew 19:23-24 mentions both of these kinds of kingdoms: “Jesus said to His disciples, Truly I say to you, Only with difficulty will a rich man enter into the kingdom of the heavens. And again I say to you, It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Matthew 21:43 also mentions the kingdom of God: “Therefore I say to you that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation producing its fruit.” [By reading these verses, we can see that the kingdom of God was there already but that the kingdom of the heavens had not yet come.](#)

**Matthew 13:41** speaks of [the kingdom of the Son of Man](#): “The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will collect out of His kingdom all the stumbling blocks and those who practice lawlessness.” The kingdom of the Son of Man is the third kind of kingdom mentioned in the Scriptures.

In **Matthew 13:43** there is [the Father’s kingdom](#): “Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

**Ephesians 5:5** mentions [the kingdom of Christ and of God](#): “This you realize, knowing that every fornicator or unclean person or greedy person (who is an idolater) has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” The kingdom of Christ and of God is the fifth kingdom.

**Second Samuel 7:13** is a promise or a prophecy concerning Christ: “It is he who will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” Christ will be the Son of David to build up the house of

God, and God will set up His throne with His kingdom forever. This is **the kingdom of the Son of David or the kingdom of David**. The kingdom of the Son of David is also mentioned in Luke 1:32-33: “He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of David His father, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” Before the Lord Jesus was born, the angel told His mother that her son would be the successor to the throne of David. This is the kingdom of David or the kingdom of the Son of David. Acts 15:16 says, “After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen; and I will rebuild its ruins and erect it again.” This verse indicates that the tabernacle of David was ruined but that the Lord will come back to restore and rebuild it. This is the kingdom of David. The kingdom of the Son of David or the tabernacle of David is the sixth kingdom mentioned in the Scriptures.

The seventh kingdom is mentioned in **Acts 1:6**: “The ones who came together asked Him, saying, Lord, are You at this time restoring the kingdom to Israel?” Here we have **the kingdom of Israel**. Matthew 25:34 says, “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit **the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world**.” Here is a kingdom prepared not before the foundation of the world but from the foundation of the world. This is the eighth kind of kingdom. The ninth kingdom is **the millennial kingdom** (Rev. 11:15; 20:4-6). Finally, there is **the kingdom of Messiah**, the messianic kingdom (Dan. 7:14).

### THE BEGINNING AND ENDING OF THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS AND ITS PROCESS

The kingdom of the heavens is divided into two periods: the period of its appearance and reality and the period of its manifestation. **The appearance and reality of the kingdom begins, progresses, and ends with the church. The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens begins, progresses, and ends with the millennium.** Matthew 3:2; 4:17; and 10:7 show us several things: **First**, they show us that the kingdom of the heavens had a beginning. **It came at a definite time, and before its coming, it was near.** **Second**, before John the Baptist came, the kingdom of the heavens **had not yet come.** **Third**, when John the Baptist came out to preach, the kingdom of the heavens had not yet come but **was near.** **Fourth**, even when the Lord Jesus began to preach, the kingdom of the heavens had not yet come but **was still near.** **Fifth**, even when the Lord Jesus sent out the twelve and the seventy disciples to preach, the kingdom of the heavens **had not yet arrived but was near.** **Matthew 11:11** says, “Truly I say to you, **Among those born of women there has not arisen one greater than John the Baptist, yet he who is least in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he.**” This verse proves that in the Old Testament time the kingdom of the heavens had not yet come. The kingdom of the heavens had not come even at the time of John the Baptist, because the prophets in the Old Testament and John the Baptist were not people in the kingdom of the heavens. According to Matthew 11:12, from the time John the Baptist came out to preach until the time he was put into prison, the kingdom of the heavens had not yet come formally. **The period from John the Baptist to the formal arrival of the kingdom of the heavens was a period of transition.** During that transitional period, although the kingdom of the heavens had not yet formally arrived, **men could enter into the kingdom if they so desired.** We may illustrate this by a new shop that does business before its formal, grand opening. After it does business for a while, it has a grand opening. **The grand opening of the kingdom of the heavens was on the day of Pentecost, but people like Peter and John entered into the kingdom of the heavens before that time.**

In almost every instance, the Gospel of Matthew uses the term the kingdom of the heavens. However, in Matthew 12 the Lord used the term the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus was very careful in His speaking. The kingdom of God is used in that chapter instead of the kingdom of the heavens because at that time the kingdom of the heavens had not yet formally come. When the Lord Jesus cast out demons, He manifested the authority of God before the Jews, but that was simply the kingdom of God coming to them, not the kingdom of the heavens. **This indicates that before the kingdom of the heavens came, the kingdom of God already existed.**

Now let us read **Matthew 21:43**: “Therefore I say to you that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation producing its fruit.” **This verse proves that the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of the heavens, was in the midst of the Jewish people at that time.** The parable in **Matthew 22:2-4** shows us that **the kingdom of the heavens began at the time of the preaching of the gospel after the Lord Jesus had died, resurrected, and accomplished redemption.**

In the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, the Lord Jesus did not say, “The kingdom of the heavens has become like...” It was not until the parable of the tares that the Lord said, “The kingdom of the heavens has become like...” This is because the appearance and reality of the kingdom of the heavens began from the event spoken of in the parable of the tares, that is, the happenings at Pentecost.

In **Matthew 16:18-19**, after the Lord Jesus said that He would build His church, He also said that He would give the keys of the kingdom of the heavens to Peter. This shows that when Peter used the keys of the kingdom, **the Lord began to build the church. It was at Pentecost that Peter used the keys of the kingdom of the heavens to open the door for men to believe and enter into the kingdom of the heavens. It was also at that time that the Lord began to build His church. Therefore, the beginning of the church at Pentecost was also the beginning of the kingdom of the heavens.**

**Once the church began, there were the overcoming believers in the church living in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens as recorded in Matthew 5—7. Hence, the reality of the kingdom of the heavens began at that time.** On the other hand, once the church came into existence, Satan **mixed the false Christians, the tares, with the real Christians.** Thus, the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens also began at that time. Therefore, the reality and the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens began nearly at the same time with the church after Pentecost.

**Matthew 18:17-18** shows us that the authority of the kingdom of the heavens which Peter possessed at the beginning of the church is also later possessed by the church. Under normal conditions the church has the authority of the kingdom of the heavens to bind what the heavens have bound and to loose what the heavens have loosed. **This proves that the kingdom of the heavens and the church progress together. Wherever there is the church, there are also the overcoming believers in the church living in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. At the same time there are the false believers mixed in to produce the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens.** Therefore, the reality and the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens started together with the church and progressed together with the church. The reality and appearance of the kingdom of the heavens go along with the church and are dependent upon the church. On the one hand, the reality of the kingdom of the heavens is hidden in the church, and on the other hand, **the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens goes along with the periphery of the church.** When the Lord Jesus comes back and ends the church age, the reality and appearance of the kingdom of the heavens will also be ended. At that time the Lord Jesus **will burn the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens, that is, the so-called Christendom.** At the same time **the reality of the kingdom of the heavens will become the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens.**

**Daniel 7:13-14** shows that at the end of this age the Lord Jesus will receive the kingdom from God and come to the earth to establish His kingdom. **Daniel 2:44** shows that at the end of this age, the Lord will crush the nations of the earth into pieces in order to establish His kingdom. **Revelation 11:15** reveals that at the end of this age, after the Lord has crushed the nations to pieces, **the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord.**

The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens will begin at that time. From then on, **the Lord and the overcoming believers will reign together in the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens and rule over the earth for a thousand years (20:4, 6).**

**First Corinthians 15:24-26** tells us that when the end has come, at the end of the millennium, the Lord will have destroyed all the powers of Satan. The last enemy that He will destroy is death. Then He will deliver up to God the kingdom that He had received from God. **When the millennium comes to a close, the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens will end. From that time on, there will be a new heaven and a new earth, the eternal kingdom of God.**

Just as the reality and appearance of the kingdom of the heavens have begun, are progressing, and will end together with the church, so also the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens begins, progresses, and ends with the millennium. To summarize briefly, **the kingdom of the heavens started with the church and ends together with the millennium. Before the church there was not the kingdom of the heavens; and after the millennium, there will not be the kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom of the heavens is contained in the two dispensations of the church and the millennium, and it embraces these two dispensations. The beginning of these two dispensations is**

the beginning of the kingdom of the heavens; the process of these two dispensations is the process of the kingdom of the heavens; and the end of these two dispensations is the end of the kingdom of the heavens.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Now we need to consider the differences between these kinds of kingdoms. First is the difference between the kingdom of the heavens and the kingdom of God. **There is a difference between the two, but they cannot be separated.** For example, we can differentiate our hand from our body, but we cannot separate them. The body is the whole, while the hand is part of the whole body. The two can be differentiated but cannot be separated. Likewise, the kingdom of God is the whole, while the kingdom of the heavens is a part of the whole. They can be differentiated but cannot be separated.

**The kingdom of God is the reigning of God.** Since it is God's reigning, it follows God's existence. God's existence is **from eternity to eternity, without beginning or ending**; therefore, God's reigning, God's kingdom, is also from eternity to eternity, without beginning or ending. The Bible shows us that the kingdom of God embraces a wide scope: it embraces eternity without beginning before the foundation of the world, Adam in the garden and the chosen patriarchs, the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, today's **church, the millennium** and **the kingdom of the heavens** in the future, and **the new heaven** and **the new earth**, which are eternal and without ending. All these six items are included in the kingdom of God and are parts of the kingdom of God. (See chart in chapter 35.)

**Daniel 7:13-14** shows that the kingdom which the Lord Jesus is bringing with Him at His second coming is the eternal kingdom which God will set up on the earth (2:44), and which is received from the Ancient of Days (Luke 19:12, 15) and belongs to the Ancient of Days, that is, to God. **This proves not only that the kingdom which the Lord Jesus will be establishing on earth is the kingdom of God but also that the kingdom is from ancient times, from eternity.**

**Matthew 3:2; 4:17**; and **10:7** indicate that when John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, and the disciples went out to preach, the kingdom of the heavens had not yet come but was near. **Matthew 21:43** shows that **before the kingdom of the heavens came, the kingdom of God was already in the midst of the Israelites.** However, because they produced no proper fruit, the kingdom of God was taken away from them and given to a people who would produce fruit, that is, **to the church.** Hence, **the kingdom of God today is the church.** This proves that both the nation of Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament are the kingdom of God, being parts of the kingdom of God.

Now let us read **Luke 13:28-29**: "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you being cast outside. And they will come from the east and the west, and from the north and the south, and will recline at table in the kingdom of God." These verses prove that the millennium in the future is also a part of the kingdom of God. What is mentioned here concerning those who will recline at table in the kingdom of God is related to the millennium. Although it is in the millennium, the Word says it is in the kingdom of God. This is because **the millennium is a part of the kingdom of God.**

**Ephesians 5:5** and **Revelation 11:15** reveal that the kingdom of the heavens in the future is also a part of the kingdom of God. These verses also mention the kingdom of Christ and of God and the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. In both cases, the kingdom is singular in the original, showing that **the kingdom of Christ and of God and the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ are not two kingdoms but one.** This kingdom is the kingdom of the heavens in the future and also the eternal kingdom of Christ mentioned in **2 Peter 1:11**. This kingdom of the heavens in the future is the ruling of Christ as King; hence, it is the kingdom of Christ. At the same time, it is God's ruling; hence, it is also the kingdom of God.

**First Corinthians 15:24** says that at the end, that is, at the end of the millennium, when Christ will have destroyed all the power of Satan, He will deliver up the kingdom to God. This proves that after the millennium, during the time of the new heaven and the new earth, the kingdom of God will still exist. Therefore, the new heaven and the new earth in the future are also a part of the kingdom of God.

Therefore, according to the Scriptures, the kingdom of God stretches from eternity to eternity, without beginning and without ending. It is very wide in its scope. The kingdom of the heavens, which has a beginning and an ending, is a part of the kingdom of God, but its scope is narrower. Before the kingdom of the heavens began, there was already the kingdom of God. After the kingdom of the heavens ends, the kingdom of God will continue to exist for eternity. During the time of the kingdom of the heavens, the kingdom of the heavens is the kingdom of God. Therefore, sometimes the kingdom of the heavens is also called the kingdom of God.

**Matthew 19:23-24** shows that the kingdom of the heavens is the kingdom of God. **Matthew 13:31-33; 11:11; and 8:11** compared with **Luke 13:18-21; 7:28; and 13:28-29** prove also that the kingdom of the heavens is the kingdom of God. Since the kingdom of the heavens is a part of the kingdom of God, it can also be called the kingdom of God. Because California is a part of the United States, it can also be called the United States. For example, a foreign visitor who comes to California also comes to the United States. Although California can be called the United States, the United States cannot be called California. Likewise, *we may call the kingdom of the heavens the kingdom of God, but we cannot call the kingdom of God the kingdom of the heavens. This is because the kingdom of God embraces the kingdom of the heavens, but the kingdom of the heavens does not embrace the kingdom of God.*

*The kingdom of God is His entire ruling from eternity to eternity. The kingdom of the heavens is the ruling of the heavens from the birth of the church to the end of the millennium. Whoever is in the kingdom of the heavens is in the kingdom of God. But all those in the kingdom of God may not necessarily be in the kingdom of the heavens. All the saved ones are in the kingdom of God, and all enter into the kingdom of God, but they may not all enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Only the overcoming believers participate in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens and will be able to enter into the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens.* This is the difference between the kingdom of the heavens and the kingdom of God.

*(The Kingdom, Chapter 47)*