

The Kingdom of God

There are various meanings of "kingdom" as the Scriptures use it. It refers to: (1) A geographical area over which a king exercises his rule; (2) the subjects over which the king exercises his rule; (3) the actual rule or authority exercised by a king without respect to persons or geographical area. (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Merrill C. Tenney, ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967, 466, "Kingdom of God.") Our concern here, however, is not with just a kingdom; it is with the Kingdom of God and its alternate and identical appellation, the Kingdom of Heaven.

Some authorities hold that the two names refer to two kingdoms that are subtly different in the biblical references to them. This writer believes they are synonymous. Only Matthew mentions the Kingdom of Heaven. The other Gospels and the remainder of the New Testament always speak of the rule of God as the Kingdom of God.

In Matthew 5:3 Jesus says:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

In Luke 6:20 He says:

"Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of **God**."

In another place in the New Testament Jesus told His disciples that it was their privilege to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 13:11. But Mark renders the same quotation as the "mystery of the kingdom of God." Mark 4:11. In these two instances at least the two kingdoms seem to be identical.

Regarding item (1) in the first paragraph above, there are not presently any geographical boundaries to the Kingdom of God. God's rule in the earth is not a physical one. It is in the hearts of men everywhere. As Jesus informed the Pharisees, "The kingdom of God is in your midst." Luke 17:21 (MLV). The persons who belong to the Kingdom constitute item (2). They are the only Kingdom of God that we know today.

The Kingdom of God is an all-inclusive one, though, and spans the many centuries from Adam (specifically, his sons, Abel and Seth) to the present day. There were different appearances to the Kingdom in different ages. It first consisted of persons like Abel and Seth, two of Adam's sons. Genesis 4. Abel's oldest brother, Cain, slew him and Abel left no descendants. Seth and his descendants became the Messianic line culminating in the birth of Jesus Christ. This line was, in a sense, the "chosen people," sometimes referred to as the "godly line," even before the rise of the Israelites. God selected them to be the progenitors of His Son, Jesus Christ. (Ref., the genealogy of Christ in Luke 3.) This line, down to Abraham, is shown below.

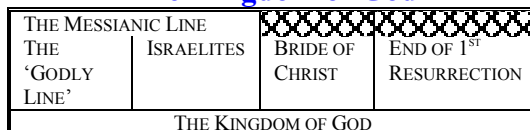
The Godly Line

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| 1. Adam | 2. Seth |
| 3. Enos | 4. Cainan |
| 5. Mahalaleel | 6. Jared |
| 7. Enoch | 8. Methuselah |
| 9. Lamech | 10. Noah |
| 11. Shem | 12. Arphaxad |
| 13. Shelah | 14. Eber |
| 15. Peleg | 16. Reu |
| 17. Serug | 18. Nahor |
| 19. Terah | 20. Abram
(Abraham) |

This was the line chosen by God without the individuals' making a personal decision in the matter. It was before the day of free moral choice. Nonetheless they could not go contrary to the will of God and prosper. For example, God smote Er, Abraham's great great grandson for his wickedness and then also slew Er's brother, Onan, for his disobedience. Genesis 38:7-10. Those in this line of descent were a part of the Kingdom of God *if they obeyed His commandments*.

For the sake of convenience we may divide the continuum of the Kingdom of God into four sections. (See diagram below.) They are: 1) the section from Seth to Terah; 2) the line from Abraham to Jesus Christ; 3) the Church; and 4) the saints who come out of the Great Tribulation.

The Kingdom of God



SETH TO TERAH	ABRAHAM TO JESUS	THE CHURCH	SAINTS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION
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Jesus came preaching the News of the Kingdom of God and told His hearers that the Kingdom was (and it still is) within the hearts of men. After Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, the Church was born. It too is a part of the Kingdom and is not something that is visible. In the consummation of all things the Kingdom shall be universal and outwardly perceived. For those living presently, their only assurance of being a part of the future Kingdom is to be a part of the Kingdom of God today. Revelation 12:10 depicts the coming universal reign of God: "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God..."

In a broad sense, the present Kingdom that is "among us" in the hearts of men, and the coming Kingdom are synonymous, although specific references in the Scriptures may at times be to one or the other of the two.

