

22T09b Kingdom of God (Part 2)

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me @ the PUNLA coffee table. What is the Bible about? I'm sure things like, God, Jesus, people of God, salvation crossed your mind. And yes, the Bible is about these things but what is the "the thing", the big Picture concept. The story about God right? And it is, no doubt. But did you know what the main topic is in the New Testament? I'm sure most of you said salvation, and yes salvation is mentioned more than forty-five times in the New Testament. Some of you probably said Eternal life, it is mentioned about sixty times in the New Testament. Would you be surprised if I told you the phrase Kingdom of God appear nearly 289 times in the KJV, and the phrase Kingdom of Heaven appears more than 110 in Matthew in the KJV. That is nearly four hundred (400) occurrences of Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven in the New Testament alone. Yes, this is the most prominent topic in the New Testament. Does that surprise you. In fact, Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God/Heaven more than any other topic, more than all other topics combined. I bet this is not what you expected. I was surprised as well.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father. Thank you for your good news. Lord use me to share your message. If I say something in error, please let them remember what you wanted them to hear, not my errand words. Help us not to be confused by the many voices and opinions we hear. May we stay focused on your word Lord. Guide our discussion. We pay in your name Lord Jesus, Amen.

Okay, Kingdom of God. The obvious next question is What is the Kingdom of God. Heaven, right? Well, not exactly. Actually, Jesus starts most of His teaching with the phrase, "the Kingdom of God is like...."

But what, where, when is the Kingdom of God. Now that is the right question. And I know the Bible has the answer

As I was preparing for this series, it became apparent there is a lot of discussion about Matthew's phrase "kingdom of heaven" and the phrase "kingdom of God" used in the other gospels and elsewhere in the Bible. Are they the same thing or not? Actually, I have heard a lot of debate about this. Especially among the so called Christian scholars. All I have to say, is sometimes it is best to read the Bible with the innocence of a child, not the pride of the proud and scholarly. So, let's take a little time and see what the Bible actually says about this issue.

Now, I believe that the Bible very clearly shows that these two terms are in fact the same thing. Kingdom of heaven is a Jewish sensitive terminology and kingdom of God straight forward terminology for the rest of us gentiles. So, why do I say this. Well, I don't say it the Bible says it. Matthew, Mark and Luke are called synoptic gospels because they describe the same or similar events from the life of Jesus. There are several accounts in Matthew which use the phrase "kingdom of Heaven" but the exact same story in Mark and Luke us the phrase "kingdom of God." There is even one story in Mathew, were Matthew uses both terms interchangeably in the same story.

So today, I want to look at these scriptures so we can clearly establish what Matthew meant when he used the phrase "kingdom of heaven."

First, let me show you a few stories in Matthew and the parallels in Mark and Luke, we will be looking at today.

Matthew 4:17	Mark 1:14-15	Jesus' ministry begins
Matthew 10:7	Luke 9:2	Sending of the Twelve
Matthew 13:10-14	Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:9-10	Mysteries of the Kingdom
Matthew 13:33	Mark 4:30-31; Luke 13:18	Mustard Seed Parable
Matthew 19:14	Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16	Little Children
Matthew 19:23	Mark 10:23; Luke 18:24	Rich Ruler

I'm going to rapid fire these at you, so please go back and read them in context so you can verify what I'm saying

First, let's start with Matthew 4. John the Baptist has been put in prison and Jesus begins His ministry with this. Matthew 4:17 (NKJV) *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"* And the parallel in Mark 1:14-15 (NKJV) *Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the **gospel of the kingdom of God**, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.**"*

Matthew uses kingdom of heaven and Mark uses kingdom of God. Same story. And now the story of Jesus sending the twelve. Matthew 10:5-10 (NKJV) *These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. "**And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.**' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food...* And the parallel in Luke 9:1-3 (NKJV) *Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. **He sent them to preach the kingdom of God** and to heal the sick. And He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece.*

See these in parallel,

- Matthew 10:5-10 (NKJV) **you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'**
- Luke 9:2 (NKJV) **He sent them to preach the kingdom of God**

Again, in Matthew preach saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand and in Luke preach the kingdom of God. Same story, same meaning. Kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God are referring to the same thing. Next Jesus is explaining to His disciples why He teaches with parables. Matthew 13:10-15 (NKJV) *And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to **know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of*

hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'

Here is the parallel from Mark 4:10-12 (NKJV) *But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.'*"

Here is the parallel from Luke 8:9-10 (NKJV) *Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?" And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.'*

So, look at it again,

- Matthew 13:11 *given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,*
- Mark 4:11 (NKJV) *"To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God;*
- Luke 8:9 (NKJV) *"To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God,*

I don't want to belabor this point too much, but this is obviously the exact same statement by Jesus in the same context. The only different is Matthew uses the euphemism "heaven" instead of "God" to be sensitive to his Jewish audience.

Next let's look at the parable of the Mustard Seed. Matthew 13:31-32 (NKJV) *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."*

Here is the parallel from Mark 4:30-33 (NKJV) *Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."*

Here is the parallel from Luke 13:18-19 (NKJV) *Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."*

These are the same parable in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Matthew says The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed,

- Matthew 13:31 (NKJV) *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed,*
- Mark 4:30-31 (NKJV) *...we liken the kingdom of God? ... It is like a mustard seed*
- Luke 13:18-19 (NKJV) *...the kingdom of God like? ...It is like a mustard seed,*

Again, I don't want to point out the obvious the exact same statement by Jesus in the same context. The only different is Matthew uses the euphemism "heaven" instead of "God" to be sensitive to his Jewish audience.

Next, we are going to look at the story when the disciples were preventing children from coming to Jesus. Matthew 19:13-15 (NKJV) *Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.*

Here is the parallel in Mark10:13-16 (NKJV) *Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.*

Here is the parallel in Luke 18:15-17 (NKJV) *Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."*

Again look at the parallels together,

- Matthew 19:14 (NKJV) *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; **for of such is the kingdom of heaven.**"*
- Mark10:14 (NKJV) *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; **for of such is the kingdom of God.** Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."*
- Here is the parallel in Luke 18:16 (NKJV) *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; **for of such is the kingdom of God.**"*

I know this is getting redundant but I want to make this point as clear as possible. The exact same statement by Jesus in the same context. The only different is Matthew uses the euphemism "heaven" instead of "God" to be sensitive to his Jewish audience.

Now let us look at the story about the rich young ruler. The young ruler says he wants to follow Jesus, then Jesus says give everything he has to the poor and the ruler goes away sorrowful. Then in Matthew 19:23-24 (NKJV) *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of heaven.** And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God.**"* Here is the parallel in Mark 10:23-25 (NKJV) *Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the **kingdom of God!**" And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the **kingdom of God!** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God.**"* Here is the parallel in Luke 18:24-25 (NKJV) *And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard*

*it is for those who have riches to enter the **kingdom of God!** For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God.**"*

Again look at the parallels together,

- Matthew 19:23-24 ... *hard for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of heaven**. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God.**"*
- Mark 10:23 ..*hard it is for those who have riches to enter the **kingdom of God!**" ... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God.**"*
- Luke 18:24 ...*hard it is for those who have riches to enter the **kingdom of God!** For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God.**"*

Do you notice something here? Look at the Matthew account. Matthew uses both kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God here. I don't know if Matthew just slipped up and said kingdom of God by accident, but it makes it very clear to us, that Matthew means kingdom of God every place he says kingdom of heaven. And of course, Mark and Luke use kingdom of God in their accounts.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father. Thank you for your good news. Thank you are every story, every message in the Bible. Help us understand your purpose for giving them. Help us to understand how you intend us to view them. Help us not to be confused by the many voices and opinions we hear. May we stay focused on your word Lord. Help me Lord to let your word lead the way so we can see your message. Thank you, Jesus, for what you did for me or all of us. We pray in your name Lord Jesus, Amen.

Okay, kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God. Well... yes. Kingdom of heaven in Matthew is the very same thing as kingdom of God in the other new testament stories. If we had any doubt, I think Matthew 19:23-24 should remove all doubt. There are other euphemisms used for kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven in the Bible like, kingdom of Christ, kingdom of the Father, kingdom of Christ and God, and others. These are all euphemisms, they are referring to the same thing, the kingdom of God. God's everlasting kingdom and yes Jesus is King.

So, why heaven instead of God? Jewish people don't want to say or write the name of God out of reverence to God. You can look at many of the old testament stories and how the Israelites never used the word of God.

Thank you for joining me @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. I hope you will join me as we study and learn about the kingdom of God.

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until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.