

# The Realm of the Kingdom of Heaven

There are many strange ideas around about the difference between the terms “Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom of Heaven”. Carnal-minded men have long tried to make a distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, as though they were two separate kingdoms. Our Lord’s instructions upon sending out the twelve were, according to Matthew, “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat. 10:7). According to Luke, “He sent them forth to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick” (Lk. 9:2). Certainly Jesus did not preach two conflicting messages at the same time! Surely He was not announcing two separate and distinct kingdoms and declaring them both to be at hand! These, and many other passages, show the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are one and the same. Yet — there is a difference! For, you see, heaven is a REALM and God is a PERSON. The Kingdom has its origin in the REALM OF HEAVEN, and in the PERSON OF GOD. The term “Kingdom of Heaven” denotes from whence (from what place, location, realm or dimension) the Kingdom proceeds, whereas the term “Kingdom of God” reveals from whom (from what person or being) the Kingdom originates. When we consider these two items, place and person, it immediately follows that as to REALM the Kingdom is out of the heavenlies, but as to PERSON the Kingdom comes from God. It is called the Kingdom OF God because it is from and by God. He is the Instigator and Head of the Kingdom. It is called the Kingdom OF Heaven because it has its inception in heaven — the invisible realm of Spirit.

In this message we shall consider the meaning, magnitude and magnificence of the realm of the Kingdom of Heaven. The gospel of the Kingdom is not the good news that we shall go to some far-off heaven somewhere and live forever in an external paradise. As extraordinarily marvelous as that would be, God has something for us far, far better than this! Going to a place called heaven is not what Jesus had in mind when He proclaimed the Kingdom of Heaven. The religious tradition concerning “going to heaven” is so strong that it distorts people’s ability to perceive and understand what is written in the Word of God. When we emphasize the concept of going to heaven to live forever, the gospel of the Kingdom becomes incoherent. Preachers are always making the foolish statement, “Except a man be born again he cannot get to heaven.” THAT’S NOT WHAT JESUS SAID! It is an absurd perversion of the word of our Lord. Jesus wasn’t talking about going anywhere — He plainly said that unless a man is born again by the Spirit of God he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

Oh! Why do men play with the Word of God? Why do they twist, change, mis-quote, mis-represent, and distort the good news of the Kingdom? Is it not the incredible darkness of the carnal mind and the ignorant foolishness of religion? I tell you today that the gospel of the Kingdom of God has absolutely nothing to do with dying and going to heaven — it has everything to do with the rule of God coming into this earth. Redemption is not a change of location — it is a transformation of the state of being. The Father’s desire is not that we leave the world behind someday to “fly away” to

our mansion in the sky. His desire is for us to leave the world behind right now and press forward each day deeper and deeper into the depths of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

I once read the story about Thomas Huxley. He was a devoted disciple of Darwin, the famous biologist, teacher, and author. Huxley staunchly defended the theory of evolution. An avowed humanist, he was bold and convincing as he traveled widely giving his lectures, which were a series of blistering attacks on Christianity, and especially what he called, "The alleged resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth." One day, having finished a series of public assaults against Biblical truth, Huxley was in a hurry to catch his train to the next city. He took one of Dublin's famous horse drawn taxis and settled back with his eyes closed to rest himself for a few minutes. He assumed the driver had been told the destination by the hotel doorman, so all he said as he got in the cab was, "Hurry, I'm almost late. Drive as fast as you can." The horses lurched forward and galloped across Dublin at break-neck speed. After they had gone some distance Huxley glanced out of the window only to realize that they were going west, away from the morning sun, not toward it. They were not headed toward the train station but were actually getting farther and farther away from it. The scholar leaned forward and shouted to the driver, "Do you know where you're going?" Without looking back or slacking the pace the driver yelled a classic line. It was not meant to be humorous, nor is it when you think about the truth it contains. "No, your Honor," the driver shouted back, "but I'm going as fast as I can!"

That story is more than a story. It is the graphic illustration of the whole church world today. All think they are on their way to heaven and they are going just as fast as they can to get there. Great speed, much commotion, a rapid pace — but a journey to nowhere! They have eternal life, alright, and they are headed somewhere, but not where they think. The planet with the golden streets, the mansions, the harps, the white night gowns, the fluttering wings — all the visible, external things their hopes are fastened upon DO NOT EXIST. And they are traveling at break-neck speed in the wrong direction — away from all the glorious and eternal reality those things represent!

One of the beautiful symbolisms given us in the book of Revelation is the Holy City "coming down from God out of heaven" (Rev. 21:2). When John said that this city comes down from God out of heaven, he wasn't talking about coming down past Mercury, Jupiter and Mars. He meant not that it would settle down over the mount of Olives or any other geographical location. In the Bible a city represents a government, and the "holy" city is a righteous government. It is not a man-made government. It doesn't have a "Democratic," "Republican," "Reform," "Labor," or "Conservative" party. It emanates from God, out of the celestial or spiritual realm, and is established on earth through a heavenly people. May the blessed spirit of revelation grant us the clarity to see that this city shall never rule until it has in all truth become the "holy" city, prepared, adorned, and "made ready." She comes down from heaven. Her origin is divine, her nature, her character, is heavenly — "out of heaven from God." One is reminded of the scripture, "As IS the heavenly, such are they also THAT ARE heavenly...we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Cor. 15:48-49).

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 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 He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:2-5). My beloved, John saw the city descending down from God to earth. He did not see us going out into space somewhere. God is going to perfect His elect right here upon earth with a divine life that comes out of God from heaven, and they are going to reign upon the earth. "Suddenly there came from heaven the sound of a rushing mighty wind...and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men! And He shall dwell with them! God is coming to dwell with mankind. That is the power and the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

Yet millions of Christians vainly imagine that they are going to a city up in the sky to live there with Jesus forever and ever. Multitudes believe that somehow they will escape "The Great Tribulation" by being "raptured," snatched up to heaven. The testimony of scripture is just the opposite of man's childish superstitions. God has always come to man. In the sacred mists of long ago Eden the Lord God came down and walked and talked with Adam. In another place we find that the Lord appeared on the plains of Mamre and walked and talked with our father Abraham. God came down on Mount Sinai in flaming fire and smoke before the face of the whole assembled nation of Israel, and gave them His law. God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle in the wilderness so that He could have a dwelling place in the midst of our Israelite forefathers. Long centuries later "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14). John saw the city descending from God, and it is descending from God. With every message of God that is preached, the Holy City is coming down to earth. With every person that is born from above, thus becoming a citizen of that city, it is coming down to earth. With every person who receives the anointing of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, the Holy City is coming down to earth. With every member of God's elect who grows up another step into perfection, into the image and likeness of the Holy One, the Holy City is coming down to earth. With every revelation that comes to us from the Spirit of God and that takes us onward into the perfect fulfillment of God's great plan and purpose in our lives, the Holy City is descending to earth. As the principles of the Kingdom of God — righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost — are established in our lives, the Holy City is coming down from God out of heaven. When the nature and character of our heavenly Father are formed in us, and His precious mind rules our hearts, the Holy City is descending to earth. With every victory over sin and sickness, over limitation, darkness and death, the Holy City is descending to earth. Beloved, it will continue descending with the development of the body of Christ into its full stature. It will descend and descend until the prayer that Jesus taught for sons is fulfilled: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

In an article some time ago Terry and Tykie Crisp wrote, "Why is it that this Great City is coming DOWN OUT of heaven? It's because of the burdened appeal of creation! Beloved, there is coming a GLORIOUS CHURCH in these last days, a church which has been caught up to the highest heaven, to the very throne of God...but who, because of the spirit of sonship in their hearts, will not be able to ignore the groaning of the prisoners! They will come down from the heavenlies in High Priestly attire, bearing their gem-studded breastplate, which is the burden of mankind upon their hearts...with deliverance, with power, and with authority, to set the captives free! Imagine, if you will, a church so virtuous and bright that the nations of the world will walk in the light thereof, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory and honor to it, submitting themselves to her authority, and seeking wisdom from her mouth!" — end quote.

This great city, the heavenly Jerusalem that started coming down on the day of Pentecost, shall continue to come down from God out of heaven. That is, it shall continue to descend from out of the divine consciousness and life of the Lord into the receptivity and consciousness and experience of His people on earth. It shall persist until all that dwell upon the earth shall walk in its light and enter in through its gates. Then shall the whole earth be filled with the glory and the knowledge of the Lord. Even now the new heavens — THE NEW MIND AND SPIRIT — are descending into our hearts, our nature, creating within us a new earth for the tabernacling of God. Every thing that God sends down out of heaven is infinitely good and glorious. Two thousand years ago He sent Jesus as His best gift, and all the world has been blessed by that gift. When He brings heaven down to us we know that He is bringing His best. Every good and every perfect gift cometh down from above. A king once gave a diamond to one of his friends, and the friend said, "Sire, this is too great a gift for me to receive." But the king answered, "It is not too great a gift for a king to give." In like manner, if the full manifestation of the life and glory of God in you, His elect, seems beyond what you deserve or are capable of, remember! it is NOT TOO MUCH FOR GOD TO GIVE AND DO!

According to the beloved John everything on earth IS going to be transformed. He speaks of a new heaven and a new earth. He speaks of all things made new. At present heaven and earth are quite separate states of existence, but in the new City of God which John beheld in spirit they are no longer two, but one. It is my conviction that the veil between seen and unseen is a very flimsy one, and that this seemingly solid matter that forms our prison-house is not so very solid after all. Probably it is nothing more than our own thought exercised upon a very limited plane, a darkened perception. It is quite conceivable that we might wake up, as it were, from a sleep, and realize that there never has been a material and a spiritual, but that we have all the time been living at the very center of reality, only we did not know it. If men were only endowed sufficiently with the spirit of wisdom and revelation, and ready for the change, the veil between heaven and earth would be taken away, the heavens would be opened, and the two would be seen as one, as it was with the servant of Elisha that day in Dothan when he saw the armies of heaven upon the mountains of Israel. This is what John means by the city coming down; it is heaven taking possession of earth and absorbing it into itself. That is the Kingdom of Heaven on earth!

The world is to be won for God; there is to be a transformed society of men on earth; in the end earth will become heaven. Death will be abolished, and sin and sorrow will flee away. When John used the language of Isaiah about the city needing no light of the sun he meant it in even a grander way. Henceforth God in Christ is to be the light of every man's life, all the nations are to walk in that light, and love and brotherhood be all in all. But he makes a bold stroke at this point by departing from the Old Testament dream of the Jerusalem Temple. He says that God Himself will be the Temple, and men shall worship Him in spirit and in truth. Looking back, as it were, upon the desecration and destruction which had fallen upon the temple that was formerly the pride and the glory of Israel, he says in effect: Well, let it go! At the best it was only a beautiful symbol for a still more beautiful reality. Nothing is lost by the ruin of that which was built by hands. God Himself is our Temple — God in Christ! We need no other. The whole earth is full of His glory, and in Him we live and move and have our being. By destroying the outward it throws us back upon the inward; it removes the local and temporary to fix our gaze upon the universal and eternal.

Some of us surely have noticed the beautifully significant picture of God's purposes given us in those glorious and divine events that transpired at Sinai, the mountain of God, when Moses and the

children of Israel came face to face with God there. Until this moment encounters between Yahweh and men had always taken place on an individual basis. But now there was a dramatic change — the private and individual revelation is transformed into a public and corporate one. An entire nation, from sage to servant, witnesses Mount Sinai engulfed in smoke, God descending in fire, the mountain quaking to the rising crescendo of the shofar (ram's horn), and the Voice giving the law — the Constitution of God's chosen nation on earth.

A magnificent event, yet in the midst of this cosmic marriage, something else of strange and great significance is taking place. The whole story is found in Exodus, chapter nineteen. First, "God descended on Mount Sinai, and God called Moses to the mountain peak" (Ex. 19:20). Once Moses begins to ascend, God tells him to "go back down" (Ex. 19:21) and warn the people not to cross the boundary. Moses replies that they "cannot climb mount Sinai. You already warned them to set a barrier around the foot of the mountain and not to cross it, for whoever touches the mountain will die." Again, God says to Moses, "Go down. You can then come back up along with Aaron. But the priests and the rest of the people must not violate the boundary" (Ex. 19:24). As soon as Moses descends, God begins the Ten Commandments: "I am the Lord thy God..."

Why was this momentous occasion marked by so many directions, instructions, warnings? Had God forgotten that He had already commanded Moses to tell the people not to approach the mountain? Why must Moses point out to God what God certainly knows? This scene is not merely a logistical account of where everyone — God, Moses, Aaron, the priests and the nation — were positioned on that historic occasion. It depicts a divine tension between the idea of "ascending" and "descending." Moses seemed to think that the highest spiritual experience is achieved by turning one's back on the world, forsaking wife, children, friends, job, responsibilities, recreation, and all the mundane things of life, and ascending into a high plane in the Spirit alone. But God is saying that His way of merging and becoming one with creation, has an altogether different focus. The task of sonship is not to escape the world and ascend into the heights of God in some mystical experience, but to bring God down, to redeem the world, change humanity, and transform creation, to suffuse spirituality into every aspect of its existence. Before Moses ever "ascended" into the glory of God, God first "descended" on Mount Sinai before the faces of all the people. Then further, He sent down His law — His nature — into their midst. Had Moses merely gone up the mountain — had God not also descended — the laws he brought down would have been more suited for the mountain peaks and the seekers who climb them in search for God. But at Sinai the entire nation saw the almighty Yahweh descend into the world of His creation. And that very day the Lord said, "Ye shall be unto me an holy nation, and a KINGDOM OF PRIESTS." Ah, when God and man meet and are brought into union, there is the Kingdom of Heaven on earth!

Do you want to know where the glory of God can be found? God came down in Christ Jesus and tabernacled among mankind and men beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And now God has descended again in the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. The Kingdom OF Heaven is not the Kingdom IN Heaven. The prayer Jesus taught us to pray is not, "Come, take us away up to heaven to live with You," but "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." It is the Kingdom of Heaven on earth and in earth. No man can ascend into the world of God until first God descends into his world. The descending and ascending bring glorious UNION between God and man. It is there that we know oneness with Him and receive His law, His government in our hearts!

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Revision #1

Created 2026-07-04 12:06:58 UTC by sysadmin

Updated 2026-07-04 12:07:46 UTC by sysadmin