

The Kingdom

I. Introductory points to consider -

A. There are two ways to derive a system of theology -

1. Search out *all* of the relevant passages of Scripture and from those passages derive your system of theology.
2. Derive your system of theology and then search out the relevant passages of Scripture which support your system of theology while ignoring those passages that don't.

B. Bear in mind the progressive nature of God's revelation in Scripture. The Old Testament does not contain everything there is to know on a subject. Thus, Old Testament saints and early New Testament saints (prior to the completion of the New Testament canon) had a partial understanding of many subjects. As God's revelation progressed, more and new information was added in the New Testament until it was finally completed. In order to understand a subject, one must examine all of Scripture.

C. Bear in mind that there is an eschatology of Israel which is revealed primarily in the Old Testament with further information in the New Testament, and there is an eschatology of the Church which is revealed *only* in the New Testament but is kept a mystery in the Old Testament. These eschatologies are very different in their details. A great deal of confusion arises when these details are mixed together. They do, however, share one common detail - they both reach on into eternity.

D. The kingdom program of God occupies a large portion of Scripture in both Testaments. In spite of all that the Bible has to say about the kingdom program of God, there are still many different interpretations and explanations regarding this program. For example -

1. Some teach that the kingdom is synonymous with the eternal state (heaven). One enters this kingdom only upon death. This kingdom has absolutely no relationship to the earth.
2. Some teach that the kingdom is a spiritual kingdom in which God rules in the hearts of people. Thus, it is here now, but it has no relationship to the earth.
3. Some teach that the kingdom is only an earthly, political, social kingdom which has no spiritual realities attached to it. This kingdom can be achieved by the efforts of man and is the goal to which we must strive.
4. Some teach that the kingdom applies only to the nation of Israel which will one day be restored as an independent nation in the political realm.
5. Some teach that the kingdom is synonymous with the Church (i.e., the Church is the kingdom) or that the Church becomes the kingdom.
6. Some teach that the kingdom is the manifestation, in the earthly realm, of the universal sovereignty of God in which He rules in the affairs of men. Such a manifestation has both a spiritual and an earthly aspect to it.

II. The kingdom of God ... the kingdom of heaven ... the eternal kingdom ... the theocratic kingdom -

A. As one examines the Scripture, one quickly discovers that there are various aspects to the kingdom over which God is King, as well as various uses of the term *kingdom*.

B. The kingdom of God ... the kingdom of heaven -

1. The primary meaning of the word *kingdom* (basilea - #932) is *reign*. Thus, the regal power and authority of the King are basic to the meaning of this word.
2. The phrases *kingdom of God* and *kingdom of heaven* do not appear in the Old Testament. These

phrases are unique to the New Testament.

3. The phrase *kingdom of heaven* is unique to the Gospel of Matthew. Why?
 - a. Some have suggested that Matthew uses the phrase *kingdom of heaven* rather than the phrase *kingdom of God* because he is writing to Jews who had a special reverence for the name of God and who tended to substitute the name of God with something else closely linked to God (i.e., heaven). However, if this is the case, then Matthew is inconsistent because four times he uses the phrase *kingdom of God* (Matthew 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43).
 - b. Some have suggested that Matthew uses the phrase *kingdom of heaven* rather than the phrase *kingdom of God* because the phrase *kingdom of heaven* is frequently identified with the *theocratic kingdom* (see below) which the Jews were eagerly anticipating.
4. Neither the Lord Jesus, nor John the Baptist, nor the Apostles, nor the writers of the New Testament define what is meant by these phrases. One may conclude, then, that their understanding of these phrases was derived from their understanding of the kingdom as presented in the Old Testament.
5. Theologians note that, while these phrases may be used interchangeably in *some* instances, they do not appear to be synonymous. The reason that these phrases may be used interchangeably in *some* instances is because there is an overlap in some of their aspects. Only the context can determine the meaning intended by these phrases.
6. Theologians have suggested the following distinctions with regard to the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God.
 - a. It must be noted that there are characteristics of the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God which overlap; thus, the terms *kingdom of heaven* and *kingdom of God* are not technical terms nor are they absolute or categorical -
 - b. Kingdom of heaven - This designation places emphasis on the earthly character of the kingdom (Matthew 6:10); as well as the ideas that the kingdom is patterned after heaven, has its origin in heaven, and is of eternal value. It is the God of heaven who will establish it.
 - c. Kingdom of God - This designation places emphasis on the spiritual character of the kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:50). The glory of God is its sole object and is the aim and purpose of the kingdom. Entrance into the kingdom is on the basis of faith / repentance (John 3:3-5. Acts 8:12).
Consider - Colossians 1:13. 2 Timothy 4:18.

C. The eternal kingdom ... the theocratic kingdom -

1. There is an eternal, universal aspect to the kingdom which is administered directly by God.
 - a. Theologians call this aspect the *eternal kingdom*.
 - b. The eternal kingdom is God's direct rule over every being in heaven and on earth who are willingly subject to Him in the exercise of His sovereignty.
 - c. Broadly speaking, this designation looks at God's rule universally and from eternity to eternity.
 - d. The phrase *kingdom of God* is often associated with this aspect.
2. There is a temporal, local aspect to the kingdom which is administered by individuals appointed by God.
 - a. Theologians call this aspect the *theocratic kingdom*.
 - b. In the theocratic kingdom, submission to the sovereignty of God is not universal nor is it necessarily willing. Some willingly submit. Some submit because they are forced to do so or because they fear the consequences of not doing so. Some refuse to submit. Matthew 8:12 states that some will be cast out of the kingdom of heaven - this cannot be said of the kingdom of God (John 3:3; 10:27-29).

- c. Broadly speaking, this designation looks at God's rule locally and restricted with respect to time.
- d. The phrase *kingdom of heaven* is often associated with this aspect.
- e. There are various phases of the theocratic kingdom and different media through which God's sovereignty is manifested.

D. While there are definite theological distinctions between the eternal kingdom and the theocratic kingdom, one must guard against using the phrases *kingdom of God* and *kingdom of heaven* in an absolute or categorical sense. Only the context can determine the meaning intended by these phrases. Thus, when considering the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, one must determine what aspect is in view or what is being emphasized - the eternal / universal aspect of the eternal kingdom or the temporal / local aspect of the theocratic kingdom or an overlap of these kingdoms.

III. Old Testament teaching on the eternal and theocratic kingdoms -

A. Diagram 1 - Eternity Past -

1. In eternity past (Exodus 15:18. Psalm 45:6; 145:11-13. Lamentations 5:19), the eternal kingdom of God was His sovereign rule over every created being who was willingly subject to Him (which was every created being) (1 Chronicles 29:11-12. Psalm 103:19).
2. In eternity past (Matthew 25:34), the Godhead conceived of the theocratic kingdom which would be brought into existence in time and on earth to counter the kingdom which would be established by Lucifer when he sinned and was cast out of heaven.
3. Consider also - Psalm 10:16; 29:10; 93:1-2; 95:3; 97:1-2; 98:6-9; 146:10. Isaiah 6:5; 66:1. Jeremiah 10:10. Daniel 4:3, 34, 37; 6:26. Consider also - 1 Timothy 1:17.

B. Diagram 2 - The Result of the Fall of Satan -

1. The eternal kingdom of God was challenged by Lucifer (Ezekiel 28:11-19. Isaiah 14:12-15).
2. As a result of this challenge, Lucifer was cast out of heaven and a kingdom over which he rules (Acts 26:18) was formed in opposition to the kingdom over which God rules. Hence, he is called the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), and the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 16:11). The whole world lies in his power (1 John 5:19). He is seen as the possessor of the kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:5-7. Matthew 4:8-9).

C. Diagram 3 - The Theocratic Kingdom Brought into Time -

1. At the appropriate time, God brought into existence on earth the theocratic kingdom which had been conceived in the eternal counsels of the Godhead. This theocratic kingdom presented a direct challenge by God to the kingdom established by Lucifer at his fall.

- a. The Old Testament links God's theocratic rule and kingdom *primarily* and *specifically* with the nation of Israel - Psalm 5:2; 20:9; 24:7-10; 44:4; 47:6; 48:2; 68:24; 74:12; 84:3; 99:1-4; 145:1. Isaiah 33:17. Jeremiah 8:19. Malachi 1:14. Consider also - Matthew 5:35.

However, the Gentile nations are seen to be under God's *general* theocratic rule - 1 Chronicles 16:30-31. Psalm 47:2, 7-8. Jeremiah 10:7; 46:18; 48:15; 49:38; 51:57. Daniel 4:17, 25, 32. Consider also - Revelation 15:3.

- b. This theocratic kingdom was administered by God (Judges 8:23. Psalm 149:2. Isaiah 41:21; 43:15; 44:6. Consider - Exodus 40:34-35. 1 Kings 8:10-12. 2 Chronicles 5:13 - 6:1) ...

... as well as by those who had been appointed by God -

- 1) The patriarchs (Genesis 12:1-3; 26:2-5; 28:12-15).

- 2) Moses (Exodus 4:16; 7:1).
 - 3) Joshua (Joshua 1:5-9).
 - 4) The various priests (Deuteronomy 17:8-12).
 - 5) The judges (Judges 2:16, 18).
 - 6) The kings (1 Samuel 8:7; 12:12. Deuteronomy 17:14-20).
2. It was during this period of the theocratic kingdom that God made certain unconditional promises to His chosen people Israel; namely, the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12), the Palestinian Covenant (Deuteronomy 30), the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7), and the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31). These covenants must be and will be fulfilled during the future Millennial (Psalm 2:6, 8-12; 22:27-28. Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14, 18, 21-22, 27) / Davidic kingdoms (2 Samuel 7:12-16. Psalm 89:28-29, 35-36. Jeremiah 23:5-6. Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25). Perhaps the reason for these unconditional promises was because God knew that one day His presence and His theocratic kingdom would be temporarily withdrawn from His rebellious people; and yet, they were still His chosen people who held a special place in His eternal plans, and He wanted to assure them that they were not forsaken.

D. Diagram 4 - The Theocratic Kingdom Withdrawn -

1. Because of Israel's continual defiance, rebellion, and disobedience (2 Chronicles 36:14-16), God withdrew His presence from Israel (Ezekiel 10:4, 18; 11:23), as well as His theocratic kingdom over them (2 Kings 24:3-4, 20). The temple and Jerusalem (the center of God's theocratic kingdom) were destroyed (2 Chronicles 36:17-19. 2 Kings 25:9-10), and the kingly line was temporarily terminated (2 Kings 25:7).
2. It should be noted that, when Israel returned from exile in Babylon and rebuilt the temple and Jerusalem, the glory of the Lord did not return and the kingly line was not reestablished.

IV. New Testament teaching on the eternal and theocratic kingdoms -

A. Diagram 5 - The Theocratic Kingdom Offered -

1. Approximately 600 years had elapsed since God withdrew His glorious presence from Israel and the kingly line was temporarily terminated.
2. The Lord Jesus Christ was brought into this world with the following announcements -
 - a. Matthew 2:2 - Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? Consider - Matthew 27:11, 29, 37, 42. John 1:49.
 - b. Luke 1:32 - The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.
 - c. Luke 1:33 - He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.
3. The kingdom is offered -
 - a. What is being offered? The theocratic kingdom / Davidic kingdom promised in the OT is being offered to the nation of Israel in the Person of the King (Luke 10:9; 17:21 [nasb]. Micah 5:2) who would fulfill the Davidic Covenant (Matthew 1:1).
 - 1) The promises of the Davidic Covenant - 2 Samuel 7:12-16. 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; 22:9-10. Psalm 89:28-29, 35-36. Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25. Hosea 3:4-5.
 - 2) Christ's fulfillment of the promises - Isaiah 9:7. Jeremiah 23:5-6.
 - b. To whom is the offer of the kingdom being made? The kingdom is being offered only to Israel as a nation. Matthew 10:5-7; 15:24. Acts 1:6.

It should be noted that there could be no universal application of the Old Testament covenant blessings applied to the Gentiles until Israel had experienced the realization of the theocratic kingdom in which kingdom and in whose King the nations would be blessed.

- c. Note the spiritual element attached to the kingdom offer - repent / believe - Matthew 3:2; 4:17. Mark 1:15 (Matthew 4:23; 9:35).
- 1) The element of repentance / belief is not unique to the NT - Deuteronomy 30:2. 1 Kings 8:47 (2 Chronicles 6:37). Isaiah 30:15. Ezekiel 14:6; 18:30, 32.
 - 2) The reason that the theocratic kingdom was withdrawn in the Old Testament and the Lord's glorious presence departed and the kingly line temporarily terminated was because of Israel's sin and lack of faith / repentance. The call now goes out for Israel as a nation to repent and believe in order for the theocratic kingdom to be established. Thus, it is of utmost importance to realize that this offer of the kingdom is a contingent offer - it was contingent upon Israel's national repentance.

B. Diagram 6 - The Theocratic Kingdom Rejected and Withdrawn -

1. The King and kingdom rejected -
 - a. Matthew 11:2 (Mark 1:14. Luke 3:20) - The forerunner imprisoned.
 - b. Matthew 11:20 - They did not repent.
 - c. Matthew 12:14 (Mark 3:6. Luke 6:11) - They conspired with the Herodians as to how they might destroy Him.
 - d. Matthew 12:24 (9:34. Mark 3:22) - He is possessed ... He casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons. Note - This response is in answer to the question of verse 23.
 - e. Matthew 12:39 - An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign.
 - f. It is significant that these rejections of the King and the kingdom occur prior to the presentation of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven / God in Matthew 13:11 (Mark 4:11. Luke 8:10).
 - g. Consider - John 1:11; 5:18; 8:59; 10:39; 11:53; 19:14-15.
2. The King's impending death announced - Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19.
3. The offer of the kingdom officially withdrawn - Matthew 21:42-43; 23:37-39 (Luke 13:35). Luke 19:41-44. Consider - Romans 11:7-10, 15, 17, 19-22, 25.

There were some in Israel who acknowledged the King and His kingdom (Matthew 21:9. Mark 11:9-10. Luke 19:38. John 12:13). However, the nation as a whole had rejected Him and His kingdom. As a result of this national rejection, the offer of the kingdom was withdrawn.

4. Note - After His rejection by the nation of Israel (Matthew 11:2, 20; 12:14, 24, 39) and prior to His presentation of the kingdom in mystery form (Matthew 13:10-53), the Lord Jesus began to offer Himself to any and all who would receive Him (Matthew 11:28-30; 12:50 [John 6:40]).

C. Diagram 7 - The Theocratic Kingdom in Mystery Form -

1. What is a mystery? A mystery is something that was hidden in the past but has now been revealed. Romans 16:25-26. Ephesians 3:3-5. Colossians 1:26. Consider - Romans 11:25.
 - a. The mystery was not the fact that God was going to establish a kingdom in which to display His sovereignty because this was clearly and repeatedly prophesied in the Old Testament.
 - b. The mystery was the fact that, when the One in whom this kingdom was to be realized was publicly presented, He would be rejected and an age would fall between His rejection and the fulfillment of God's kingdom promises. In other words, the mystery is the fact that a great interval of time would intervene between the offer of the kingdom and the reception of that offer. Consider - Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:17-20. Note - The reception of the offer and the fulfillment

of God's kingdom promises will take place at the Second Advent of Christ.

2. After it became abundantly clear that the nation of Israel had rejected Him from being their King and had rejected His offer of the theocratic kingdom in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, the Lord Jesus did two things -

- a. He presented the kingdom of heaven / God in mystery form - Matthew 13:10-53 (11). Mark 4:10-34 (11). Luke 8:10.

The mystery form of the kingdom is the present day, interim form of the kingdom *while the King is absent*. In other words, the mystery form of the kingdom is the form of the kingdom during the inter-advent period [between His rejection at His first advent and His reception at His second advent].

- b. He announced the creation of a new entity - the Church (Matthew 16:13-19) - composed of Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 3:28) who are recipients of spiritual, heavenly blessings (Ephesians 1:3) and whose citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

Note that the Church is also referred to as being a mystery - Ephesians 3:3-6. Colossians 1:26-27. While the Church and the kingdom are described in terms of a mystery and are present at the same time, they are not synonymous. The Church is not the mystery form of the kingdom. However, the Church is a part of the mystery form of the kingdom.

3. The mystery form of the kingdom is not ... -

- a. ... the Millennial Kingdom since the Millennial Kingdom was clearly predicted in the OT and was not a mystery.

- 1) The devil is chained in the abyss in the Millennium (Revelation 20:1-3) but is quite active in the mystery form of the kingdom (Matthew 13:19, 37-39).
- 2) Compare Matthew 13:41-42, 49-50 with 24:29-31. In both cases, the righteous and the wicked are separated. The time of this separation is *immediately after the tribulation with the Son of Man coming on the clouds* (Matthew 24:29-30) which is prior to *the righteous shining forth ... in the kingdom of their Father* (Matthew 13:43) (i.e., the Millennial Kingdom).

- b. ... the eternal kingdom since the eternal kingdom is composed only of individuals who are believers in and willing subjects of the King and who enter by the new birth (John 3:3). The mystery form of the kingdom, on the other hand, is composed of believers and unbelievers (wheat and tares [Matthew 13:37-43], good and bad fish [Matthew 13:47-50]).

- 1) These reasons also explain why the Church is not the mystery form of the kingdom.
- 2) The mystery form of the kingdom concludes *at the end of the age* (Matthew 13:39-40, 49). The eternal kingdom does not have a conclusion; otherwise, it would not be eternal.

4. Consider the seven parables in Matthew 13 which deal with the theocratic kingdom in mystery form and which present characteristics with regard to the present age -

- a. The parable of the sower - verses 3-9, 18-23 - Mark 4:2-9, 14-20. Luke 8:5-8, 11-15 - The seed of the Word is sown far and wide, but only a small portion comes to fruition.
- b. The parable of the wheat and the tares - verses 24-30, 36-43 - The wheat (*the sons of the kingdom*) and the tares (*the sons of the evil one*) are allowed to grow together until the end of the age when they are separated and the tares destroyed. Consider - 1 Timothy 4:1-3. 2 Timothy 3:1-5. 2 Peter 2:1-22. Jude 3-23.
- c. The parable of the mustard seed - verses 31-32 - Mark 4:31-32. Luke 13:19 - The seed has a small beginning but grows into a large tree that provides shelter for the birds of the air (verse 4 and 19).

- d. The parable of the leaven - verse 33 - Luke 13:20-21 - Leaven is typically a picture of evil (1 Corinthians 5:8) and is also seen for its permeating effect.
 - e. The parable of the hidden treasure - verse 44 - Israel is viewed as a treasure (Deuteronomy 26:18. Psalm 83:3) hidden in a field (Matthew 13:38). The field is purchased in order to acquire the hidden treasure. It is interesting to note that the first twelve chapters of Matthew place tremendous emphasis on Israel and on the offer of the kingdom to Israel. After Israel's rejection of the King and His kingdom, she is little more than a treasure hidden in a field relegated to that position in a single verse.
 - f. The parable of the pearl - verses 45-46 - The Merchant is seen selling all that He has in order to purchase a single pearl (the Church). Consider - 1 Peter 1:18-19. Acts 20:28. Revelation 5:9.
 - g. The parable of the dragnet - verses 47-50 - The dragnet gathers fish of every kind which are eventually separated one from another. The good are kept, and the bad are destroyed.
5. The Tribulation period -
- a. The Tribulation period is a part of the mystery form of the kingdom because ... -
 - 1) ... the King is still absent.
 - 2) ... the separation of the righteous from the wicked (Matthew 13:41-42, 49-50; 24:29-31) does not take place until the King returns to establish His kingdom.
 - b. It is during the Tribulation which culminates in the Second Advent of Christ that the theocratic kingdom will again be offered to Israel.
 - 1) The Gospel of the kingdom will be preached - Matthew 24:14. By whom? Revelation 7:1-4 and 14:1.
 - 2) Note that the Gospel of the kingdom will not be limited to Israel (Matthew 8:11. Revelation 14:6-7; 7:9-10) [Matthew 25:31-32, 34, 40].
 - 3) Israel will be restored - Romans 11:15, 23-26, 28-29. Jeremiah 30:7-11.
- D. Diagram 8 - The Second Advent and the Beginning of the Millennium -
1. At this point in history, the theocratic kingdom is known as the Millennial Kingdom / Davidic Kingdom.
 - a. The Millennial Kingdom and the Davidic Kingdom are not synonymous terms. The Davidic kingdom is a part of the Millennial kingdom. The Millennial kingdom is global (though centered in Israel) while the Davidic kingdom is limited to the nation of Israel.
 - b. The Davidic kingdom - 2 Samuel 7:12-16. Psalm 89:28-29, 35-36. Jeremiah 23:5-6; 30:9; 33:14-17. Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25. Consider also - 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; 22:9-10. Isaiah 9:7; 11:1. Hosea 3:4-5.
 - c. The Millennial kingdom - Psalm 2:6, 8-12; 22:27-28. Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14, 18, 21-22, 27. Zechariah 14:9, 16-17. Consider also - Isaiah 24:21-23. Ezekiel 37:21-22; 43:7. Obadiah 21. Micah 4:6-8; 5:2. Zephaniah 3:14-20.
 - d. The Jews of both Testaments longed and hoped for these kingdoms. Mark 15:43. Acts 1:6.
 2. The theocratic (Millennial / Davidic) kingdom is a literal, earthly kingdom (Revelation 11:15) over which Christ (Revelation 17:14; 19:6, 16; 20:4. Zechariah 14:9) and His co-regent David (Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25. Hosea 3:5) rule in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant and the Old Testament promises.
 3. Satan and his dominion are removed - Revelation 20:1-3. 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (Revelation 19:20).

4. The theocratic kingdom is an absolute necessity in order to preserve the integrity of God. He made promises and eternal, unconditional covenants (Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New) which *must* be fulfilled. Since this is the last period of time before eternity, then these promises and covenants must be fulfilled at this time.

E. Diagram 9 - During the Millennium -

As time progresses in the Millennial Kingdom, children will be born to those who believed during the Tribulation and survived to enter the kingdom. These children will have a sin nature. They must also believe in Christ in order to be saved and to enjoy eternal life. Some, however, will not believe. While outward rebellion will not be tolerated during the reign of Christ, inward rebellion will run rampant among those who refuse to believe.

F. Diagram 10 - The End of the Millennium -

Satan will be released from the abyss (Revelation 20:7). He will attempt to establish his former dominion by deceiving those who refused to believe in Christ into thinking that they can defeat Christ and His followers (Revelation 20:8). They will rise up against Christ and the saints and will once and for all be defeated (Revelation 20:9-10).

G. Diagram 11 - Eternity Future -

1. God will destroy the original creation (2 Peter 3:10-12. Revelation 21:1). He will then create a new heaven and a new earth and a new Jerusalem (2 Peter 3:13. Revelation 21:1-4). Consider - Revelation 21:1 - 22:5.
2. The theocratic kingdom will merge with the eternal kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:24-28) so that there will no longer be a distinction between the two (Revelation 21:1-3, 22-23; 22:1, 3).
3. The kingdom established by Lucifer no longer exists.

V. Difficult passages -

- A. Matthew 5:19 - ***Whoever then annuls*** (breaks [nkjv], sets aside [niv]) ***one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven***; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

1. Annul, break, set aside - to loose, to loosen what is fast, to unbind. In this context dealing with the commandments, would mean to loosen the obligation of the commandment. Thus, the commandment is interpreted and taught in such a way that its obligations are loosened or made less stringent.
2. Those who annul (break, set aside) the least commandments are still in the kingdom; they have not been cast out. This is because entrance into the kingdom is on the basis of faith and not teaching. However, those who loosen the obligations of the commandments are considered least in rank and dignity in the kingdom.

- B. Matthew 8:11-12 - I say to you that ***many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out*** into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

1. Note the context - Jesus is talking to the Roman centurion whose faith is greater than anyone in Israel.
2. The contrast is between the Gentiles (from east and west) who have no claim on the kingdom but who enter by faith in Christ and the Jews (the sons of the kingdom) to whom the kingdom belongs but who are cast out because they refused to believe in Christ.

- C. Matthew 11:11 (Luke 7:28) - Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet ***the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he***.

This passage speaks to greater privilege and not greater character. Up to this point in time, no one had arisen who had a greater privilege than John the Baptist. He had the distinct honor of announcing the arrival of the King and His kingdom. However, the least citizen of the kingdom has a greater privilege than the one who merely announced its arrival. To enjoy the blessings of the kingdom is greater than to be the forerunner of the King.

- D. Matthew 11:12-14 - ***From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.*** For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And ***if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.***
1. From the very beginning, the religious leaders had vigorously opposed the offer of the kingdom and had continually acted with violence against it and against the King (John 1:11; 5:18; 8:59; 10:39; 11:53). In the end, the King would be taken by force (Matthew 26:47) and crucified (John 19:14-15).
 2. ***If you are willing to accept it (the kingdom), John himself is Elijah who was to come*** - If Israel was willing to accept the offer of the kingdom in repentance and faith (Mark 1:15), then John the Baptist would have fulfilled the role of Elijah (Malachi 4:5). Consider - Luke 1:17. Because Israel rejected the King and His kingdom, Elijah's coming is still future.
- E. Luke 16:16 - The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time ***the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.***
1. Those who were ready and waiting for the King's advent responded vigorously to His offer of the kingdom and strained every muscle to enter it. Consider - Mark 15:43. Luke 23:50-51.
 2. Note that the preaching of the kingdom produced violent results. On the one hand, there were those who were violently opposed to it and sought to destroy it (Matthew 11:12-14). On the other hand, there were those who eagerly awaited it and forced their way into it (Luke 16:16).
- F. Matthew 16:16-19 - Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ***I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven;*** and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."
1. As noted earlier, while the Church and the kingdom are described in terms of a mystery and are present at the same time, they are not synonymous. The Church is not the mystery form of the kingdom. However, the Church is a part of the mystery form of the kingdom. It must be noted that the mystery form of the kingdom is broader than the Church.
 2. Peter was given the keys to the mystery form of the kingdom. He opened the doors to that kingdom on the Day of Pentecost when he was the first to publicly proclaim the Gospel to the Jews and Gentile proselytes who had gathered for the feast (Acts 2:1-36). The result of that open door was ...
 - a. ... the salvation of three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). These three thousand souls were added to the Church.
 - b. ... the influx of false-professors (false teachers / prophets) who feign submission to God, but who never truly believed in Christ (2 Timothy 3:1-5. 2 Peter 2:1-22. Jude 4-19). These individuals

are part of the kingdom because of their feigned submission, but they are not a part of the Church because they never believed in Christ. These will be those who are removed at the end of the age (Matthew 13:41-42, 49-50).

- G. Matthew 16:28 - Truly I say to you, ***there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.***

The kingdom has been rejected by Israel (Matthew 11:20; 12:14, 24, 39) and subsequently postponed. A new entity (the Church) is introduced (Matthew 16:18). Christ announces His suffering and death at the hands of the religious leaders (Matthew 16:21). Lest the disciples think that the kingdom has been permanently taken away from Israel, Christ gives them a glimpse of what awaits Israel upon her reception of Him as King - Matthew 17:1-8. Such a glimpse served to confirm the kingdom promise and to offer assurance of its final fulfillment. Consider - 2 Peter 1:16-19.

- H. Matthew 21:43 - Therefore I say to you, ***the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.***

1. People - ethnos - #1484 - The vast majority of times ethnos is used, it is used in reference to non-Jewish peoples. However, there are occasions when it is used of the Jewish people. When this is so, it is translated *nation*, and it is quite obvious that the nation of Israel is in view (Luke 23:2. John 11:48. Acts 10:22).
2. Two common interpretations are posited for this verse -
 - a. The kingdom of God will be taken away from the present people of Israel and given to a future people of Israel (at the second advent) who manifest the requisite faith and repentance (Matthew 23:39).
 - b. The kingdom of God will be taken away from the present people of Israel and given to another [non-Jewish] people (the Church) in mystery form until it is finally restored to the nation of Israel at the second advent when Israel manifests the requisite faith and repentance (Matthew 23:39).
 - c. Regardless of which interpretation one accepts, two points are very clear -
 - 1) The kingdom of God will be taken away from Israel.
 - 2) The kingdom of God will be restored to Israel upon faith and repentance. This point is essential in order for God to fulfill His covenant promises to the nation of Israel.

- I. What does Paul mean by his warnings regarding not inheriting the kingdom of God in the following passages? When there are difficult passages, they must be interpreted in the light of the simple, clear, and straightforward passages. Pay attention to the details!

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - Or do you not know that ***the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?*** Do not be deceived; ***neither*** fornicators, ***nor*** idolaters, ***nor*** adulterers, ***nor*** effeminate, ***nor*** homosexuals, ***nor*** thieves, ***nor*** the covetous, ***nor*** drunkards, ***nor*** revilers, ***nor*** swindlers, ***will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified*** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Galatians 5:19-23 - Now ***the deeds of the flesh*** are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that ***those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*** But ***the fruit of the Spirit*** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; ***against such things there is no law.***

Ephesians 5:5-8 - For this you know with certainty, that ***no*** immoral ***or*** impure person ***or*** covetous man,

who is an idolater, **has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God**. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things **the wrath of God** comes upon **the sons of disobedience**. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for **you were formerly darkness**, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.

1. Some make the claim that there is a difference between entering the kingdom (John 3:3) and inheriting the kingdom. However, can this claim be supported by Scripture? Are these passages talking about believers who will enter the kingdom through faith but who will not inherit the kingdom because of their deeds (i.e., they are carnal believers)? Or are these passages contrasting believers, all of whom will enter *and* inherit the kingdom, with unbelievers, none of whom will enter *or* inherit the kingdom? Are these passages warning believers who will enter and inherit the kingdom not to live like unbelievers who will not enter or inherit the kingdom? To answer these questions, one must pay attention to the details and compare these less clear passages with clear, straightforward passages.
2. It seems clear that these passages are presenting a contrast between believers and unbelievers and not between spiritual believers and carnal believers -
 - a. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.
 - 1) The contrast is between *the unrighteous* who will not inherit the kingdom of God and those who were *washed ... sanctified ... justified*.
 - 2) Are believers, regardless of how carnal they may be, ever referred to as *the unrighteous*? Believers may do unrighteous things, but they are never labeled *the unrighteous*.
 - 3) Are not *all* believers, regardless of how carnal they may be, *washed and sanctified and justified*? These are acts of God that are linked to one's salvation; they are not linked to one's walk. Compare - 1 Corinthians 1:2 with 3:1-3. In 1:2, Paul calls the Corinthians *sanctified and saints*; yet in 3:1-3, he calls them *men of flesh, infants in Christ, and fleshly*; they are not *spiritual men*. Regardless of their carnality and their lack of spirituality, they were still sanctified saints.
 - 4) Thus, the contrast is between *the unrighteous who will not inherit the kingdom of God* and those who were *washed and sanctified and justified*. In other words, the contrast is between believers and unbelievers.
 - b. Galatians 5:19-23 - Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
 - 1) The contrast is between those who will not inherit the kingdom of God because they practice the deeds of the flesh (which are aroused by the law [Romans 7:5]) and those who bear the fruit of the Spirit (against which there is no law).
 - 2) Consider the word *practice* - *prasso* - #4238 - This word is only found in the writings of Paul and Luke and in John 3:20 (*does evil*); 5:29 (*committed the evil deeds*).
 - a) The Complete Wordstudy Dictionary - ... expressing an action as continued or not yet completed, what one does repeatedly, continually, habitually ...

b) Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries - ... perform repeatedly or habitually ...

c) The two times that John uses this word are very telling.

- (1) John 3:20-21 (nasb) - For everyone who **does** (prasso - *this should be translated practice*) evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who **practices** (poieo [#4160] - *this should be translated does*) the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

For whatever reason, those who translated this passage translated the words backwards. The passage should read - For everyone who **practices** evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who **does** the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God. Thus, the one who *practices* () hates the Light (Christ) and does not come to the Light (Christ). The fact that one is a believer means that one loves the Light and has already come to the Light.

- (2) John 5:28-29 - Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did (poieo) the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who **committed** (prasso - *this should be translated practice*) the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

This passage should read - Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who **practiced** the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. Thus, the one who *practices* evil looks forward to a resurrection of judgment rather than a resurrection of life. This simply cannot be said of believers who have eternal life in Christ (John 3:16) and who are no longer under condemnation (Romans 8:1).

- (3) It should be noted that John does not use this word at all in his first epistle.

d) Paul is not talking about doing something occasionally or falling into sin or struggling with sin. Paul is talking about a continual, habitual, repeated practice. These things are characteristic of the individual's life. These are things which identify the individual. These are things which are done willingly and willfully. Such is not the practice of a child of God. Such things are indicative of unbelievers.

3) Consider the link between the law and the flesh and their contrast with the Spirit.

- a) Romans 7:5-6 - For while we were **in the flesh**, the **sinful passions**, which were **aroused by the Law**, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for **death**. But now **we have been released from the Law**, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.
- b) Romans 8:5-9 - For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 However, **you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit**, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.
- c) Those in the flesh have their sinful passions aroused by the law which results in death. Believers have been released from the law. Believers are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit dwells in them. If a person does not the Spirit, then that person is not a believer.

4) Thus, the contrast is between those who are in the flesh and under the law and who practice the deeds of the flesh and those who are in the Spirit and who have been released from the

law and who bear the fruit of the Spirit. In other words, the contrast is between believers and unbelievers.

- c. Ephesians 5:5-8 - For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.
- 1) The contrast is between those who have no inheritance in the kingdom of God because they are in darkness and under the wrath of God and sons of disobedience and those who are Light in the Lord.
 - 2) Under the wrath of God - John 3:36 - Those who do not obey (believe in) the Son. Because believers (by definition) believe in the Son, they are not under the wrath of God. Paul explicitly states that believers are not under the wrath of God (Romans 5:9. 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9).
 - 3) Sons of disobedience - This is a designation of the lost (those who are dead in trespasses and sins) - Ephesians 2:1-3. Note also the mention of *children of wrath* in verse 3. Consider - Colossians 3:5-7.
 - 4) Do not be partakers with them - There is a distinction between the believers to whom Paul is writing and warning and those who have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. In other words, there is a distinction between believers and unbelievers. Paul makes this same distinction in the Colossians 3:5-7 passage.
 - 5) You were formerly darkness ... now you are Light - They once, as unbelievers (darkness), had no inheritance in the kingdom of God. Now, as believers (Light), they have that inheritance.
 - 6) Thus, the contrast is between those are sons of disobedience and under the wrath of God and those who were formerly in that darkness. In other words, the contrast is between believers and unbelievers.
- d. In each of these passages, Paul is warning and encouraging believers who inherit the kingdom not to live like those who don't.
3. What does the Bible say about the believer's inheritance - this includes everything he will inherit?
- a. The believer's inheritance is based on faith in Christ (Acts 26:18) through God's grace (Titus 3:7).

Revelation 21:7 - He who overcomes will inherit these things. How does John use the word *overcome*? 1 John 5:4-5 - Overcome is synonymous with faith / believe. Thus, the believer's inheritance is based on the One in Whom he believes.
 - b. The believer's inheritance is not based on his deeds. It is based on Whose he is - he is a child and son of the Father. He became a child of God through faith in Christ (John 1:12) at which time he entered the kingdom of God (John 3:3). He became a son of God through adoption (Romans 8:15. Galatians 4:5-6. Ephesians 1:5) at which time he inherited the kingdom of God (Romans 8:16-17. Ephesians 1:11). Note that both his adoption and his inheritance were predestined by God. The believer's inheritance is based on his sonship; it is not based on his deeds.
 - c. The believer's inheritance is reserved (1 Peter 1:4) and is linked to the new birth (born again) (1 Peter 1:3).
 - d. The believer is a fellow heir with Christ (Romans 8:16-17). In other words, what Christ inherits, the believer also inherits. Since Christ inherits the kingdom, then the believer will also inherit the

kingdom. Consider - If children ... then heirs. Contrapositive - If not heirs ... then not children.

- e. If the believer's inheritance is based on faith and not works, if the believer's inheritance is predestined by God and is the result of God's predestined adoption to sonship making him a fellow-heir with Christ, and if the believer's inheritance is reserved, then there is absolutely nothing that can be done by the believer to change that. If the believer can lose his inheritance by some deed, then it was not of faith, was not predestined, was not reserved, and was not based on his relationship with Christ through adoption.

4. Some additional thoughts.

- a. What aspect of the kingdom of God is in view here? Is Paul talking about not inheriting the universal / eternal aspect of the kingdom? Or is Paul talking about not inheriting the temporal / local aspect of the kingdom (i.e., the Millennial kingdom)?
 - 1) If Paul uses the phrase *kingdom of God* consistently in his writings, then flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50). If this is the case, it's doubtful he's referring to the theocratic kingdom of the Millennium.
 - 2) If Paul is referring to the theocratic kingdom of the Millennium, then *all* believers today (the Church) will inherit the kingdom because the Church is the bride of Christ and is a fellow-heir with Him. Therefore, what He inherits, the Church also inherits. Since He is the King who will inherit the theocratic kingdom in the Millennium, then the Church will also inherit it with Him.
- b. There are some who confuse Paul's warnings in 1 Corinthians 6, Galatians 5, and Ephesians 5 with John's warnings in his first epistle. John is contrasting spiritually-minded, obedient believers who are in fellowship with God with carnal believers who are out of fellowship with God. Paul, on the other hand, is contrasting believers who will inherit the kingdom with unbelievers who will not inherit the kingdom. In contrasting believers with unbelievers, Paul warns believers (who inherit the kingdom) to not live like unbelievers (who will not inherit the kingdom). These warnings are not new nor are they unique. Consider - Ephesians 4 (walk no longer as Gentiles). 1 Peter 4 (the time already past is sufficient for you to carry out the desire of the Gentiles). Romans 8 (in the flesh versus in the Spirit).