

A Commentary on the Difference Between The Kingdom of Heaven and The Kingdom of God

This is a preface to the titled study which I felt the need to write after I completed it. It seemed necessary to do so because of the almost universal belief, by Bible students and scholars in the synonymity of these two expressions. I say almost not because I have found any opponents to that premise, but because I cannot believe that I am the only one into whose heart and mind this was sent. These are two distinct and separate kingdoms. From what I have been able to determine, the whole basis for this “universal belief” in synonymity is based on four or so of the seemingly identical parables that appear to depict the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven as being one and the same. It’s my suspicion that this is why this “false belief” is so popular.

It’s because most students of Scripture think nothing of the matter until they read the parables, and see these that seem to apply equally to where they refer to the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. This seems to be such a powerful evidence of synonymity that there appears to be no need to delve into Scripture any further regarding the matter. If one chose to examine the issue further, starting with the parables, it is very likely that it would not be very fruitful. I think that its benefit would not be unlike reading one of the books of the Bible word for word, backwards.

In this study I have started where it seems to make sense to start, that is with the first mention of the two kingdoms.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the term Kingdom of Heaven is used 33 times, and the Kingdom of God is used 5 times. In the Gospels of Mark, Luke and John there is no mention of the Kingdom of Heaven. Only the term Kingdom of God is used, and a few instances it is used in reference to situations seemingly identical to where Matthew uses the phrase kingdom of heaven. Does that make the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven synonymous? Do they have identical meanings, and do we therefore have license to use them interchangeably? Most Bible scholars seem to believe that it is obviously so,

and therefore find no reason to even consider the idea that they are anything but synonymous terms. Again, the principal basis for this conclusion seems to be the fact that those several of Jesus' parables that describe the kingdom of heaven are also used to describe the kingdom of God. But is this a sufficient reason for such a sweeping conclusion? If it was commonly believed among the apostles that the two terms can be used interchangeably because they mean the same thing, why didn't any of the other three Gospel writers even once use Kingdom of Heaven?

The kingdom of God is mentioned over ninety times by these three Gospel writers, but not once do they mention the kingdom of heaven. If these are two names for the same thing, the odds of this happening are too big for it to be considered "coincidental". Our precious God-Authorred text is the epitome of both inerrant Truth as well as precision that begs to be recognized, honored and understood! How many times must a biblical Christian experience God's Word, His awesome truth and His precision in conveying His truth, before he or she can no longer shrug off something like this as merely the arbitrary use of synonymous words? I don't believe that this is sound exegesis. Furthermore, it reveals a doubt of the precision of God's Word, and at the same time, it denies the student of the Bible's many precious, but obscure insights, and precepts that are there to reward the more diligent and persevering.

The ancient Hebrews saw pattern as an important key to understanding God's written Word. Where there appeared to be a break in pattern they viewed this to be a clue indicating the presence of something of a deeper, or hidden meaning. They called the hint of something deeper, a "remez." When they detected the likelihood of a hidden meaning, it was called a "sod." I believe that we have here such a pattern-breaking clue. Being "loose" with words is wholly inconsistent with God's manner of authorship. I believe that the Holy Bible, in its originally written form and language, and as it has been preserved in the King James Version, was not simply "inspired". It was actually carefully guarded by God. Although it contains several errors, God allowed them to remain in that the essence of His Word was not compromised. The Bible in its original Greek and Hebrew is both inerrant and precise. It is truly and wholly the direct Word of

God. If the reader has any doubt about this, then the argument presented above, and what follows, may not dissuade him or her from the “synonym” argument. Neither does this mean that one who has this belief about Scripture must inevitably accept all of what I will have here written. That can only be determined by how faithfully I follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and how well I am able to articulate what I deeply believe He has given me to understand.

Before I continue with this, I feel the need to mention that I didn’t want to pursue this subject because at that time, it did not seem to be of any great importance. I reasoned that accepting or not accepting the “synonym” argument was relatively minor in the big picture. Even though I sensed that there was something here, it seemed unlikely that it was effectual in matters regarding faith and salvation. So why, with so many other very serious things to challenge us in these end times of ever increasing apostasy and false teaching, did I bother with this? I don’t know, except for the fact that for some reason it began to weigh ever more heavily on my heart and to occupy ever larger portions of my musings regarding Scripture.

Then it severely invaded my sleep time, over and over again, sometimes for many hours of many nights. I prayed repeatedly for God to remove this so that I could sleep, but He would not. Finally, it came to me after a month or so of this, that I was being “persuaded” to delve into the issue, and to then record what He wanted me to find. After making that commitment, this aspect of my sleep problem went away! I did carry the issue to bed, but I could now turn off these particular thoughts whenever I chose to do so. This manner of inducement has in the past caused me to write many of my recorded musings. However, almost every other time, I met the challenge gratefully, and eagerly, and so I didn’t experience this strange prodding. I now have studied and do write this from a sincere desire, because I believe that I have been clearly prompted to do so. How effective and glorifying to His name it will be, is completely in His Hands.

As I have delved into this kingdom issue, I have grown to appreciate that it is no minor thing, but one of far greater significance than I first believed. While it is not a doctrinal

matter that will affect salvation, I believe that a whole new vista of understanding of one very important portion of God's grand master plan, and His method for filling His kingdom with saints, is here involved.

Other than from this strange and carefully crafted distinction that Matthew seems to make between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God, on what basis or what Scriptural evidences is there to reasonably conclude that these are not simply two names for the same kingdom as nearly everyone seems to believe? Like many scriptural truths there is no verse or set of verses that specifically state in simple terms that these are two different kingdoms. Nor are there any verses that require us to conclude that both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are but two names for the same kingdom. It's only in the parables where synonymity seems to apply. Nevertheless, the evidence from which one can compellingly conclude that they are different kingdoms is, I believe very clear, if we first unwrap, and bring together, the several scriptural passages that not only make a strong case against synonymity, but also reveal many details of how the two kingdoms are necessary and distinctly different components to God's incredible redemptive plan. Not only will we find that the kingdoms are very different from one another, but we will also learn just what the differences are, and how compellingly these differences offer a precious insight to God's end time plan.

The first clue, as mentioned, is the anomaly regarding how Matthew speaks so many times of the kingdom of heaven, while no other Gospel writers mentions this kingdom, but speak nearly a hundred times of the kingdom of God. As noted, the Word of God is not only impeccably truthful, it is also precise. We have no right to rationalize and come to firm conclusions that are based on presumptions which ignore that precision. At this point, the reader may conclude that this is just what I have done. We must seek from within Scripture a thoughtful, God honoring explanation of what we don't understand, rather than let presumptive conclusions rule over serious study and thought. There are many places in Scripture where precision appears to be lacking. Where we find these I believe its wrong to question the precision, but instead acknowledge our own limitations in fully understanding what is so carefully being revealed. If we let it stand that there are

actual instances where precision is lacking, than we must admit to the belief that God doesn't always mean what He says, nor does He always say what He means.

What I believe can be demonstrated is that the original kingdom that came into being at creation, was a universal all-inclusive kingdom that continued, until the advent our God/Man Christ Jesus. It was then divided into two kingdoms. At first, when Jesus began His ministry, Jesus' earthly kingdom of heaven came into being as a limited and partial portion of the universal kingdom. Later, after Jesus' physical death and resurrection, something that happened a little earlier, caused the Father to turn over to Jesus all of creation. This enlarged Jesus' earthly kingdom of heaven and reduced what had been God's universal kingdom to a spiritual kingdom, nearly the same as it had been before sin brought with it corruption and decay. From that time on, Jesus' kingdom, was called the kingdom of heaven which included all of creation, and God's kingdom was then called the kingdom of God. This kingdom was strictly a spiritual kingdom fully separated from all sin, and all that was physical. Only the spiritually sinless, that is those who had been justified and glorified could come into the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven was where Jesus did all of this preparation.

This now pure spiritual-only kingdom of God was ready to accept all redeemed souls that would be saved as a result of Jesus' work in His earthly kingdom of heaven. When the Father gave all of creation to Jesus, He was left with nothing more than that spiritual place where only the Triune Godhead, and the angels reside. Because all of creation was given, even the angels were included with what the Father gave Jesus. However, because they were sinless spirits, it's my view that they retained their residency in the kingdom of God, subject to Jesus' call for them on an "as needed" basis. This separation of the kingdoms will end when every soul willing to be saved under the terms established by Jesus, will have been saved and transported to the kingdom of God. In a moment we will see what I believe is how and where all of this is presented in Scripture.

Having established the earthly kingdom of heaven, Jesus commissioned His apostles, and His disciples, to continue it, and to grow it for the duration of His physical absence when

He left to go back to the Father's place of residency that place where the kingdom of God exists. Once back in heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to be the Comforter, and to indwell the new hearts of every person who chose Jesus to be their Lord and Savior. The purpose of His preparing the disciples while He was here on earth, was for their continuing role in this earthly kingdom of heaven while He was away. The preparing process is called "sanctification". While governing and supervising the work of the kingdom of heaven, from God's kingdom where He now resides, Jesus' current role is also that of the Mediator between our Father-God and man. (1 Timothy 2:5) He is the Mediator/Author of a new covenant that is the whole of the New Testament, which might be considered the foundation, or the "constitutional" framework of His enterprise, that is the earthly kingdom of heaven.

The new covenant is in no way a replacement of the Old Testament, but instead, is for the most part, an explanatory embellishment of it. The current phase of the kingdom of heaven, in which we now live, will end with the Rapture when He will come back for the church, but He will come only as far as the clouds. From there He will call His church, that is He will call them to join Him in the kingdom of God. However, this earthly kingdom of heaven will continue, although in a modified form and focus, for yet a little while after the Rapture. That is, His testimony will continue to be heard and acted upon until the end of the Tribulation, but in a considerably different manner than how He now deals with the church. The ending of the Tribulation will bring on the final stage of the kingdom of heaven, that is the 1000 year Davidic kingdom during which Jesus will physically and spiritually rule here on the earth.

At the end of the 1000 years, the whole purpose of the kingdom of heaven will have been completed. Just before this earth is destroyed, Jesus will deliver the fruits of that kingdom to the Father, and thus into the then, one and only kingdom, the kingdom of God, which will then consist of a new physical heaven and earth. There, all redeemed, that is saved mankind, the angels, Jesus and the Triune Godhead will dwell throughout eternity. Again you ask where is the biblical evidence that permits such a scenario to have validity? A

good start and a major increment of the evidence is found in 1Corinthians 15:24-28 as follows:

“²⁴ Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For he hath put all things under his feet, But when he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. ²⁸ And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” This is not the only place where God’s conveyance to Jesus is found in Scripture. Psalm 2 alludes to this, and in Matthew 11:27 Jesus Himself confirms it.

I believe that, when combined with other scriptural verses which we will examine, this provides a clear basis for recognizing that there are two different kingdoms and why this is so. A casual reading of these verses fails to register the full meaning and ramifications of the message they provide. I know I missed it every time I read it over the years until I began this study. Notice it speaks first (verse 24) of returning that which later (verse 27) is described as having been given away. This is chronologically backwards, but is cleared up when you read verse 26.

Just in case there is any confusion, let us clarify it by starting with verse 27, where we are told that He (The Father) has put all things under His (Jesus’) feet. But when He (The Father) says all things under him (Jesus) he (the Father) is excluding Himself (the Father) from all things that He (the Father) gave to Him (Jesus). Verse 28 tell us that when all things shall have been subjected unto Him (Jesus), then shall the Son (Jesus) be subject unto Him (the Father) that put all things under Him (Jesus), that God (the Triune Godhead) may be all in all. Verse 24 tells us when this will happen. “Then cometh the end when He (Jesus) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God the Father. What kingdom? The kingdom of heaven to which the Father had added all of creation as told to us in verse 28. It is the earth, the stars, and the entire universe. It is all things created. What else is there? There is only God, that is the Triune Godhead, with which we must

include is the “Godly” place where He dwells, the same place where the Triune Godhead now dwells and has dwelled since before creation, that is in the third heaven, wherever that is. This is the spiritual kingdom of God and the only kingdom of God that now exists, and will exist until Jesus returns all things to God.

This then is what Scripture calls the kingdom of God. It is what remains with God after the Father gave all of creation to Jesus to incorporate into the kingdom of heaven. I suspect that the angels, as well as Cherubim and Seraphim also remained within the kingdom of God during this interim. However, even the angels are “available” to Jesus on an “as needed” basis. They are called upon to deal with the “principalities and powers,” that is, the fallen angels and the demons, those being supernatural, need supernatural agencies to deal with them. Verse 24 continues to tell us that when He (Jesus) “...shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.” What is this rule, authority and power that Jesus will have put down? Simply put, it is all that is unholy and ineligible for eternal life and for delivery to the spiritual kingdom of God! It is all the world’s ways, its ungodly rule, authority and power.

The culmination of this “put down” will be the White Throne Judgment when Jesus performs His last earthly act. It will be when the accumulated evil existing on and under the earth, will be cast into the lake of fire in the outer darkness. All of this summarizes the purpose, completion and end of Jesus’ kingdom of heaven. 1Corinthians 15:24-28 does not call “all things” as being all of creation, but what else could “all things be.” It’s all of creation. Neither does it call what the Father gave the Son as having been already transferred to His kingdom of heaven. However, the imminent existence of the kingdom of heaven was clearly evidenced by the fact that it had already been announced by both John the Baptist, (Matthew 3:2) and by Jesus! (Matthew 4:17)

I believe that the kingdom of heaven was created to be the depository of the “all things” of which the Father chose to divest Himself. It is evident that Matthew was given to reveal at least part of the story, because He is the only one who speaks of this kingdom. He was given enough information to enable him to be able to differentiate between the

two kingdoms, and to call them by their correct names. We see proof, or at least powerful evidences of this when he does refer to the kingdom of God, but he refers to it only where it actually applies, and is a description not uniquely applicable to the kingdom of heaven. However, it doesn't appear that he was given all of the details as found in 1 Corinthians 15. Nevertheless, it was enough to permit him to write the seven mystery parables that give us several other precious insights regarding the kingdom of heaven, and how it differs, as well as when it is similar to the kingdom of God. Through Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 the fundamental difference between these two kingdoms are strongly implied. These verses do not name the kingdoms, because it is not their purpose. Therefore, we must look to both writers, and others, in order to grow in our understanding of what is being revealed.

Before we move on, let us look back at 1Corinthians 15:27 and ponder for a moment on how strangely God chose His Words when He told us through Paul, how He exempted Himself from what He gave Jesus. *"...it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him."* First off, did we really have to be told that God exempted Himself from what He gave His Son? Doesn't that go without saying? Had God included Himself it would have done something very peculiar to the Godhead, in that the Father would then have been subordinate to the Son! He put *"all things"* under Him. God isn't a "thing" and therefore there would have been no way that anyone could have mistaken this to include the Father. Then there is the use of the word "manifest" which is used to describe this exception. The word "manifest" along with "manifested, manifesting, etc. is used a total of 52 times in the New Testament. Here it is a translation of the Greek word "velos" which in Strong's 1212 is defined as "clear, certain, evident, manifest." However, "velos" is used here and only here in Scripture. The other word most commonly translated as "manifest" is "phaneros" which connotes the meaning "clear, publically, apparent, external, appear, declare, disclose, exhibit, shew, manifest". This is how we normally think of and use the word.

So what's the point? In order to make the point, let us go back to the phrase in verse 27 and substitute manifest with the other expression of the Greek word "velos" "it is clear,

certain, evident, that he is exempted which did put all things under him.” As noted above, to have even mentioned that God Himself was exempted seems unnecessary, but when put this way, it strongly suggests, something more meaningful than the simple fact of exemption. It is forcefully and indisputingly calling attention to the fact that the Father remains elsewhere and is not included as part of the transaction. This is a subtle way of expressing the fact that He has retained His own domain, which is that kingdom of God, which “is at hand”. Am I overreaching to make my case? Perhaps, but if not this, then what is the purpose of this strange manner of expression? This is a not so subtle message telling us that with this act, there was a transfer of certain powers and responsibilities from the universal kingdom of God to the newly formed kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of God appears many times in the New Testament epistles, but neither it, nor the kingdom of heaven is spoken of in the Old Testament, except but once, and that is in Daniel 2:44. In this case, while Daniel simply calls it a kingdom, it is clearly that portion of the kingdom which will be set up after the Tribulation. That is the kingdom that God promised to Mary for her Son. It is the restoration of the earthly kingdom of David. Up to that point, Jesus will have been directing His kingdom from heaven while sitting at the right hand of the Father. His second coming, will cause the end of Satan’s rule and will send him into temporary banishment into the bottomless pit portion of hell. Then Jesus will preside in Jerusalem as the resident King of the world for the next one thousand years.

This will be the final segment of the kingdom of heaven. While Daniel didn’t know its duration, he spoke of the same kingdom period that was spoken of to Mary, that is the millennial or Davidic portion of the kingdom of heaven. There are a few biblical scholars who do see the millennial kingdom as the kingdom of heaven, and as being differentiated from the kingdom of God. They seem to believe that the kingdom of heaven is limited only to the millennium. However, the kingdom of heaven came into being when Jesus was raised from the dead, having become qualified to initiate the kingdom of heaven. This kingdom will exist in three basic segments: The church age ending with rapture, the tribulation era, which will follow the church age, ending when Satan is cast into hell; and

the millennium period which then follows and ends with the elimination of this earth and the creation of the new eternal earth.

As already mentioned, the term kingdom of heaven occurs 33 times, and every one is found only in the Gospel of Matthew. The fact that he referred to the kingdom of God five times should pique one's interest as to why, and based on related scriptural evidence, that it speaks more powerfully to the fact that there are two kingdoms rather than a single kingdom referred to by different names. This is strong evidence that Matthew knew that there were two kingdoms, because he spoke of each individually as was appropriate. In the five times he referred to the kingdom of God, it is very clear that these instances refer to something different and not applicable to the kingdom of heaven as it is here described. That fact alone, should give rise to the curious to see that something may be wrong with the "doctrine" of synonymity.

In this respect, perhaps we should also recognize that there is something unique about Matthew and the nature of his particular Gospel. Matthew was a Levite, and therefore of the official line of God-ordained priests. So it should be no surprise that he would have been raised in at least a priestly atmosphere, which would have provided knowledge of many of the lesser known subtleties to be found in the Scripture. It is likely that he received biblical training unique to his priestly class, and therefore had been even more knowledgeable than the average Pharisee regarding Scripture, and the role of the Messiah. Given the background of the other Apostles, it is unlikely that any of the New Testament writers would have had any such depth of scriptural knowledge, except perhaps Paul. Certainly as one of the four Gospels writers, his background may have been beneficially unique in his ability to serve God in His way. What seems particularly contrary to such a background was that at that time he was a tax collector, the most hated of all professions from the Jewish perspective.

Could it be then that he was a religious rebel, finding the traditions abhorrent and thereby open to what made better sense and was more consistent with the fundamentals of Scripture? Could this also be why God chose him to deliver these special insights, such

as the kingdom of heaven being different from the kingdom of God? Surely the advent of Jesus was just what he wanted. This allowed Matthew to recognize Jesus more fully as to who He really was, even before Jesus called him is why he instantly abandoned his very lucrative job the moment he was called. Also, Matthew's commission was to write about Jesus from the perspective of His being the Messiah. We all know that there are four Gospels, so that the four perspectives of Jesus could be presented. Mark concentrated on Jesus' role as a servant, Luke as to His humanity, and John as to His Godhood. It is from the Messiah perspective that one would logically expect to find Jesus' kingdom of heaven revealed. It is not that God couldn't have chosen anyone to convey what He assigned to Matthew, in as much as He Himself is the Author. As we read the Psalms, especially 2, 22 and 69, it is evident that God guided David's hand to write things that he couldn't have understood. On the other hand, where it was possible. Why not use persons who could in fact understand what they wrote?

So what was the nature of Jesus' role as the Messiah? Basically it was to first bring about the salvation of souls through His role as the suffering servant, where Scripture predicted that He would suffer and die for the sins of the world. From the beginning of His ministry to His death and resurrection, He would, and did establish in an enduring manner, His kingdom, the kingdom of, or from heaven. For the whole of His 3½ years of earthly ministry, in addition to healing many and providing absolute validity of His Messiahship, He established a corporate structure through His Apostles and Disciples that would continue His teachings, incorporating the Gospel as the basis for the salvation of all who would believe on Him. This would continue until "the times of the Gentiles be filled". This is understood to mean until the moment arrives when those coming to faith would diminish to very last person. This will coincide with the Rapture, when Jesus would call to Him from the clouds every believer in Jesus both living and dead, and thus end the Church Age.

The souls of everyone who had died in Christ will at that time receive their eternal bodies. Those yet living will ascend after them also at that time in their eternal bodies. Later, He will come back as King, and rule over the millennial kingdom as noted above.

Only through Jesus' first coming to earth as the Messiah, the Son of Man and the Son of God, could salvation ever have become possible. In recognizing this fact, we can also see that the advent of His first coming was the most stupendous thing ever to have occurred since creation. The God of creation, that is the Son personage of the Godhead came from heaven, and entered into His own creation, to live there in the flesh and blood of a mortal man. It was given to John the Baptist to announce the full significance of this event when he is recorded in Matthew as having preached of Jesus in the wilderness saying "*...Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" (Matthew 3:2)

Again, Matthew, being a Levite, God had given him a keener understanding of the significance of what was meant regarding Jesus and His kingdom that came to the earth from heaven. John the Baptist, was also the son of a Levitical priest and therefore a Levite. This may be why God chose John the Baptist to deliver, and Matthew to record this profound announcement. Then in Matthew 4:17, he quotes Jesus Himself as also preaching "*...Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" This, I believe is the operative kingdom that Jesus acquired from God's universal kingdom. This was for the specific purpose of saving souls, so that they could then enter the spiritual kingdom of God. In Mark 1:15 Jesus is quoted as saying "*...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" Here Jesus refers to the kingdom of God as also being "at hand", while in the Matthew version, Jesus speaks of the kingdom of heaven as being "at hand." What does being "at hand" mean? It never refers to some on-going condition that existed any significant amount of time. It refers to something that hasn't been, but will happen very soon. It is something imminent; something when spoken of has not yet happened but is close to happening.

Many see this as a sure sign of kingdom synonymity. However, let us look more closely. There is something very subtle but highly revealing here, that doesn't bode well for the synonymity premise. When we read that the kingdom of God is a hand, it is evident that something has happened to cause God's kingdom to now "be at hand". God's" kingdom, that universal kingdom, had existed since creation. However then, something was being changed! So why did Jesus speak here of it as now being "at hand", as if it hadn't existed

all along, but soon would. It was because the “time is fulfilled”. Think about it. This tells us that there had been a time period, now completed, that was a pre-requisite to the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God being “at hand.” Could it be simply that some event occurred that resulted in the reconfiguration of that universal kingdom into two related, but individual kingdoms? Could it be that that giving of “all things” to Jesus is what brought this about? Yes! This resulted in two closely related, but functionally different kingdom entities.

The removal of all creation from the universal kingdom of God resulted in a modified “stripped down” kingdom of God. This was a different entity, namely the spiritual-only kingdom of God. What else could this be? Father God gave everything but Himself to His son. Since creation, there had been but one kingdom, the kingdom of God, which we can correctly call the universal kingdom of God, because it encompassed everything, His Godly domain, and all of creation. When God gave all things to Jesus, God’s universal kingdom became what can rightly be call the spiritual kingdom of God, because it was then a kingdom consisting only of spirits. It remains that way and will continue so until Jesus gives everything back to God as 1Corinthians 15:24-28 tells us. Given all of this, which is quite evident to be the case, what did Jesus do with all of creation that was given to Him? We must recognize that when it was given to Jesus, it was incorporated into the entity that Jesus Himself called the kingdom of heaven, or more accurately the kingdom from heaven, and to which Matthew said “amen” 32 more times. Thus we can see that when we read that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, it is a kingdom package that hadn’t previously existed, but now is ready to be implemented. In the same way, when we read that the kingdom of God is at hand, we realize that it is also a different “kingdom package,” one that also has not existed previously, but will soon be.

What did “repent” mean when Jesus, through Mark, announced the kingdom of God as being at hand? It meant to change their minds away from the leaven of the Pharisees and the worldly ways. It meant to repent from the “grave” mistake the Jews made when they did that which caused God to put all things under Jesus’ feet. What did Jesus mean when He spoke of the Gospel? We are not told specifically what the “Gospel” was that He was

exhorting them to believe. We are told that He toured Galilee preaching and healing, and exciting many people to believe in Him and His words. In Luke 4:18 we learned He preached that He was the Messiah. In Luke 4:43 Jesus says “...*I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent*” From this we can conclude that the “Gospel” of which He spoke was any and all of the preachings which He delivered wherever He went.

Ultimately, of course the most clean and succinct definition of the Gospel as it is applicable for us, was memorialized by Paul when he defined the Gospel to mean that: “*3...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; 4 and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures:*” (1Corinthians 15:3, 4) Of course, this was not Jesus’ Gospel message, for at that time it would not have been appropriate, because He had not yet accomplished this. However, Scripture indicates that He did speak of His death several times, so He may well have preached the essence of Paul’s definition on some occasions.

It was what the Old Testament prophets had told the Jews that He would do, so it shouldn’t have been a surprise. It’s interesting to note that God, through Paul, provided this precious definition of the Gospel just a few verses before He revealed to us that the Father put all things under Jesus’ feet. Prior to Jesus’ payment, all souls saved by faith were sent to Sheol to await Jesus’ cleansing blood. However, no soul that experienced physical death, ever left the earth to reside with God while His kingdom was yet the universal kingdom of God! Only when God, after the crucifixion, had given all of creation to Jesus, and thereby having retained His kingship over only the spiritual kingdom, was there any soul allowed residency in Father God’s sinless spiritual-only kingdom! Again, based on the above, we find no evidence of synonymity. Soon we will see that similar statements regarding both kingdoms are true, accurate and precise in their individual contexts, but do not support the premise that they are synonymous.

In summarizing this very important and complex aspect of this study, as we have presented it so far, I believe we can rightly conclude the following:

1. Since creation there had been but one kingdom, the universal kingdom of God, which included His heavenly residence and all that He created, that is the earth, man, angelic beings, and the stars.
2. In the fullness of time God sent His Son to live on earth among His creation as Christ Jesus who was both Son of Man and Son of God. His primary mission was to first prove to the people that He was the promised Messiah, and to show them that absent a Savior, they could not escape eternal damnation. Then He would teach them what was needed to be saved, and how to live in gratitude for that eternal blessing. For this promise to be deliverable, the primary part of His mission was to take to Himself the guilt (sins) of all creation and pay the price a just God demanded for the propitiation of all sins.
3. When Jesus had grown to priesthood eligibility, that is to the age of thirty, it was the custom to permit religious leaders, that is Rabbis, to begin their ministries. He began His rabbinical teachings in a synagogue in Nazareth by reading Isaiah 61, verse 1 and part of verse 2 (Luke 4:12, 19) this was 3 ½ years before the kingdom of heaven was formed.
4. This was a kingdom ordained for the purposes indicated under #2 above and thereby limited in scope and duration.
5. Then it is reasonable to conclude that some exceedingly important and seminal event occurred that caused God the Father to put all things under Jesus' feet. We should read re-read, and study intensely 1Corinthians 15:24-28 in order to fully appreciate the fullness and awesomeness of the message. Here is the revelation of there being two kingdoms that have existed since Jesus was resurrected.
6. When the Father made this transfer, (in the fullness of time) there no longer was a universal, all inclusive kingdom of God, because the Father had taken out of it all things and gave them to the Son. After that, the all inclusive kingdom of God no longer existed. What remained was only the spiritual kingdom of God, which earlier Jesus also pronounced to be "at hand." Jesus couldn't say it was here, but only that it was at hand, that is nearly here. It would be here after Jesus' resurrection, which is when all of creation had been removed from it.

7. What the Father gave to Jesus was incorporated into the kingdom of heaven. Initially, Jesus' prime function was His ministry, which He had preached and practiced for 3 ½ years. The ramifications of this, along with the when and why it occurred, we will discuss shortly.

There is another point to ponder if you are still in the “synonymy syndrome,” since we have not yet discussed the parables. As if all of the above were not enough. There are two Scriptural verses that, to me at least, seem impossible to reconcile if one is to cling to the belief that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are the same thing. Matthew 11:12 reveals, *“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”* Then we read in Luke 17:20, 21 in response to the Pharisee's questions as to when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus said, *“20...The kingdom of God cometh not by observation: 21 neither shall they say Lo here! or lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”*

It is evident that in this respect, the kingdom of God is spiritual. It dwells only in those who have been saved. They are only positionally in the kingdom of God waiting to shed their mortal bodies so they can experientially be able to enter God's kingdom. Those who have it in them are surely the redeemed, and the kingdom of God is represented here on earth by the indwelling Holy Spirit! When Jesus said the kingdom of God is within you, the “you” did not apply to those to whom He was speaking. It applied only to those, that through faith, were saved. When Jesus said the kingdom of God is in you, He limited it to individual souls, which were the only places on earth where the kingdom of God could exist. God the Father Himself as an entity, resides in His heavenly place where all saved souls will one day reside with Him.

Also notice that in Matthew 11:12a Jesus has identified the time when the earthly kingdom would begin. This was *“And from the days of John the Baptist....”* While God had not yet given “all things” to Him, Jesus was teaching and preparing the way to that event. These preparatory activities by Jesus were essential in order to prove Himself, be rejected, and then suffer on the cross. As we learned above it was in the days of John the

Baptist that both he and Jesus claimed that this new entity, the kingdom of heaven was “at hand.” This was a clear declaration that the kingdom of God was spiritual, could not be seen, and was eternal. Now, how does one reconcile this with Matthew 11:12b, if the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are the same thing, when it says that the violent can take the kingdom of heaven by force? Are the violent able to take the Holy Spirit, the indwelling Spirit of the kingdom of God by force? Doesn’t once saved always saved really mean what the words say? Obviously, the kingdom that can be taken by force is not that kingdom that dwells in the redeemed heart, nor the kingdom which is God’s celestial home. The forces of evil exist only here on earth, in the kingdom of heaven in which they continually contend for the souls of men.

It could be said that the principal function of the operations within the earthly kingdom of heaven is to “rescue” souls from this evil world and prepare them for delivery to the sinless spiritual kingdom of God. We could study and analyze this problem for another 10 pages or more. Instead I’ll just leave it to the believers in the synonymy of the two kingdoms to figure out, how the kingdom of God can be taken by violence out of one who has the indwelling Holy Spirit, which symbolizes his or her positional existence in the kingdom of God. I suppose that if one believes that salvation, once attained, can be lost, or taken away, then there is no problem, no dichotomy in these verses. However, it is a big problem for those who believe “once saved, saved forever.”

But before we can leave this particular argument, it is necessary to address the apparent difficulty that Luke 16:16 poses. Here we find Jesus saying “*The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*” So what is the problem? The word “violence in Matthew 11:12b is the same Greek word used for “presseth” in Luke 16:16. Some scholars believe that this proves synonymy. Before we yield that point, let us examine the Greek derivation of these two words. The word is “biazo” according to Strong (971), means “to crowd oneself (into) or (pass) to be seized; press, suffer, violence”. As is evident, this definition expresses a range, or a variety of related, but not synonymous meanings. We should credit the King James Version translators for applying the meanings most appropriate to what they

believed Scripture was saying. I believe that they saw some difference between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God, and realized that “violence” was only applicable to the kingdom of heaven, while “presseth” best applied to the kingdom of God. If we are willing to accept this range of meanings of “biazo” and we are therefore willing to see that “presseth” and violence while derived from the same Greek word, are not the same thing, then we should acknowledge that the translators chose carefully so as to distinguish what was relevant to each kingdom.

Violence is an evident characteristic of this earthly kingdom of heaven, because it contains the whole living population with all of its wickedness. To indicate, as Jesus does, that every man “presseth” into the kingdom of God, is indicating that they desire to go to the kingdom of God, and seek to do so by trying to press through some gate. The tragedy of it all is they don’t even know God’s gate. They “presseth” to get through to the kingdom of God through the myriad of false religions (gates) that assure them that theirs is the way to the kingdom of God. The context here is Jesus speaking to the Pharisees about their self justification. It is they who wrongly believe that they were justified through Abraham, and so sought to “press” directly into the kingdom of God.

In another instance, Jesus offers advice of a related nature when asked if there are a few that be saved. In Luke 13:24, Jesus replies, “*Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*” Strait here means, “narrow” (from obstacles standing close about). Strive comes from the Greek word, “agonizomal” which means to struggle, contend with an adversary, labor fervently.” This is another way of saying that man “presseth” to enter the kingdom of God, but it can’t happen unless he first passes through the kingdom of heaven’s obstacle-removing process. Again notice that in Luke 16:16 we learn that the kingdom of God also was recognized as being “at hand” at the time of John the Baptist, not as a synonym of the kingdom of heaven, but as a separate individual kingdom.

If I have documented persuasively, and articulated clearly, what I believe to be the case, then I pray that by now, one should at least begin to see the plausibility of there being

two discrete kingdoms, and that synonymy could very well be only an illusion. As we proceed I pray that those who are more learned in Scripture will be gracious in their patience with the redundancies and peripheral “trails” that are a part of what is here presented. I suspect that those less steeped in scriptural knowledge may find this to be beneficial in their seeking to understand this very complex subject.

Before Jesus paid for all the sins of mankind, all saved souls who were in Sheol were not waiting there for their sins to be forgiven. They were waiting for Jesus to come and remove the horrible sin-caused stain that covered their soul/sprits preventing their assention to heaven. What Jesus was telling us when He said that the kingdom of God was at hand, was that the kingdom of God, that purely sinless place, had then become available to those souls. It was His resurrection from the dead, His suffering and death that gave Him the power and Authority to free them. This would also become available from that moment on, to all who would repent and believe the Gospel. Jesus said this in anticipation of the cross, and how the result of His work on the cross would, from then on make the kingdom of God accessible to all redeemed souls. It couldn't be the universal kingdom of God that was “at hand,” or this would have been a meaningless statement, because everyone, every physical thing and every spirit was already in the Universal kingdom of God. That kingdom wasn't “at hand”, because it had existed since creation. This was the pure sinless kingdom of God that remained after the Father gave “all things” to Jesus! (1Corinthians 15)

Now, as we move on, we can also make a reasonable case for why the kingdom of heaven came into existence. We can do this without doing any violence to God's inerrant Word. Again, we must keep in mind that because of God's foreknowledge, nothing happened or ever will happen that hadn't been known, and taken into consideration at the instant of creation. The whole plan, every infinitesimal piece of it, was known by God at the moment of creation. The Holy Bible is narrative of His entire plan, which He gave us both for instruction and proof of His foreknowledge through the many fulfilled prophecies. This however, does not preclude His giving man a choice to so things His way, that is allowing man to choose the wrong way. Man has almost invariably chosen

the wrong way. In their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, we see one of these wrong ways which was most profound and tragic to all of mankind, especially the Jews.

Let us now see what we can find that might tell us when and why the kingdom of heaven that had been “at hand” became necessary and functional.

Shortly before He sacrificed Himself on the cross, there occurred a very tragic event. Even though every detail of it was long known to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, it did not diminish the painful impact on them anymore than did their foreknowledge help to alleviate their agony when Jesus was on the cross. We need only to understand Psalms 22 and Isaiah 52 and 53, along with Jesus’ bloody perspiration at Gethsemane to realize that profound suffering by the Triune Godhead was “at hand.” This became “in hand” with the reality of what was expressed from the cross by Jesus. This is when Jesus revealed the full measure of His incomprehensible agony. He said “...*My God My God why hast thou forsaken me?*” (Matthew 27:46) His pain was felt by the entire Godhead. This was the sacrificial commitment God made out of His love for us. In spite of the pain it inflicted on the Triune God, Jesus’ death on the cross was no tragedy. His death and resurrection were the greatest of all of God’s achievements since creation. Jesus Himself planned every detail of His execution as several Old Testament references, and other evidences indicate.

The evidence of God’s pain and sorrows that resulted from the earlier tragic event is revealed in Matthew 23:37-39 and in Luke 19:41-44. These both tell us that Jesus grieved and shed tears over His people because of their failure to acknowledge Him as the Messiah. This lesson is very important, and although, at first, seemingly unrelated to our study, it is I believed, most relevant, as we will see. From Matthew, we read of Jesus lamenting: “*37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*” Here Jesus is lamenting over

how they had treated the prophets that God had sent. He is also speaking of Himself as one of those prophets that they will have killed. Furthermore, it is a clear prediction of the Great Tribulation and His second coming, because that is when they will finally acknowledge Him.

In Luke 19:41-44 we read that Jesus shed tears over the plight of His people. *“⁴¹ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ⁴² saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. ⁴³ For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, ⁴⁴ and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”* This is another lamentation by Jesus as He predicts the Temple destructions of 70 AD. As we can see, both of these references deal with the consequences of the Jews rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

During His ministry, Jesus had fulfilled every requirement that the Jews had been taught would be the absolute proof of the validity of the One who would come claiming to be the Messiah. He had removed a demon from a deaf mute, provided sight to a man born blind, healed lepers, raised a man to life four days dead, and performed many hundreds of Messianic miracles. The people who witnessed these things, recognized the validity of His claim, but the ruling Jewish authorities refused to acknowledge those proofs. Instead they claimed that His power came not from the Spirit of God, but from Satan. (Matthew 12:24) This was the unpardonable sin, the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit! (Matthew 12:31) It was not a sin by any individual, but a corporate sin which condemned the religious segment of the Jewish governmental structure for the next 2000 plus years. The individuals who perpetrated this were not beyond salvation, had they willingly repented, recognized Jesus as the Savior, and sought forgiveness through God’s grace.

The Matthew 23 and the Luke 19 verses both express Jesus’ response to the unpardonable sin of the governing Sanhedrin. In the Matthew verses, Jesus gave us a profound insight

regarding God's "heart" and what He would have done if only they would have accepted Jesus as Messiah! What it strongly indicates is that it would have changed all of future history! We might conclude that when Jesus says, that had they not refused Him, He would have gathered them as a hen gathers her chicks, He is summarizing the primary purpose of all history up to that point in time. Because they didn't acknowledge Him as the Messiah, history would continue in a tragic manner for the Jews, rather than the glorious future they then could have had. Had they acknowledged Him, that 70th week of years of Daniel would probably have occurred right away as an unbroken continuance of the full 70 weeks of years, 69 of which had passed up to that point. Their refusal altered history and caused 2000 years of grief, persecution suffering and premature death of millions of Jews, and even more millions of gentiles and Christians.

Had they only chose to take heed of what they should have known, that which was prophesied by Daniel in Chapter 9 verses 24-27, history would have greatly favored them, and all other peoples. Daniel listed six things that they had been ordained to do: *"24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. 25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."*

Daniel laid out, with great clarity and precision, just what their God-given roles in this world had been, and that it remained yet to be accomplished during that last seven years.

These are all mentioned in verse 24 along with the fact that they were given 490 years (70 week of years) during which they were to do them. They ignored God's directive, and so failed to do them for 483 years. Through this prophecy they were told to the very day when the Messiah would come, and that He would be cut off, that is killed for the sake of others. Daniel 9:26 predicted the 70AD destruction of the Temple, just as Jesus did in Matthew 23:38 and in Luke 19:44. Jesus also predicted their exile, which so far has lasted nearly 2000 years. Then in verse 39 of Matthew, Jesus gives them a blessed hope of restoration when they shall again see Him "...whom they have pierced." (Zechariah 12:10.) Notice that Daniel's prophecy even foretells the coming of Antichrist, and what will happen during those last seven years, because they failed to acknowledge the Messiah. Because God knew that they would not acknowledge Jesus as Messiah, the Old Testament prophecies deal only with what would be after they rejected Him.

In the Luke 19 verses we learn that Jesus does more than lament, but actually weeps with emotion as He responds again to this denial of His Messiahship. This occurred on the 10th of Nissan, the fourth day before Passover when the Jews examined the lambs they would offer for sacrifice to be certain that they were spotless. This was the day that Jesus allowed Himself to be declared the Messiah by the people, and to show Himself as the spotless "Lamb" of God who would, along with the many lambs, be sacrificed on the Passover which occurs on the 14th of Nissan. (See Luke 19:28-40 to read how this happened.) That they rejected Him did not alter what He had to do.

He came as the much predicted suffering Messiah and His suffering and dying for the remission of sins was an essential part of His mission as that Messiah. It is what would have happened after His resurrection that would have changed, had they accepted Him. Again, it is, immediately after the resurrection that the Father God put all things under Jesus' feet, thus establishing the kingdom of heaven. Had they not rejected Him, there might have been no need for the forming of the kingdom of heaven. Perhaps a more direct and less painful process would have ensued because His second coming would not have had to wait until they acknowledge and finally do recognize Him as they should have at His first coming.

Let's again look back and take a moment to appreciate as fully, as we can, this special expression of the awesome loving nature of our Lord, as well as how tragically important to Him was His rejection, and what it cost His people. We should also be aware of the prophetic nature of what these verses contain. We have here the WORD that was made flesh to dwell among us, weeping and lamenting over what His people have done to themselves, not to Him, but to themselves. This was an expression of God's intimacy with His people, and His great love for them. This is ever sufficiently appreciated by most who read these words that Jesus Himself spoke.

In the Matthew reference, He tells them of how often He would "have gathered them" to Himself, like a hen gathers her chicks. But they would not accept Him, and so His promised benevolent reign over them on David' throne was "indefinitely postponed". Instead, their house would become "desolate" (the 70 AD destruction of the Temple). As already noted, they would remain in desolation and exile until such time in the distant future when they would finally realize and acknowledge that unpardonable sin that occurred so long ago. It would then appear that corporate Israel would finally accept Him as the Lord. Notice the "till" or as we say, "until".

Just that one word is enough to negate, and totally discredit the belief in replacement theology! God had not abandoned the Jews and replaced them with the church. This "til" clearly says that He was not through with them! It speaks most clearly that He had merely "put them aside" for some unrevealed period of time until they would repent of their forefather's unpardonable sin.

Scripture describes very clearly the nature of the times when this "till" will occur. What we see as we look around us is that this time is now very close, or we could say, as Jesus did, it is "at hand". Have you ever wondered why Jesus ascended to heaven after He had set up the continuation of the kingdom of heaven program? Here, very clearly is at least one of those reasons. How could He under those circumstances had stayed here when He made it so clear that they would not see Him again "til" they acknowledge what they

should have acknowledge during His first coming? In order to come back when they were ready to admit their “mistake”, He had to have gone away so as to be able to come back.

Looking again, in Luke 19:41-44 we find similar sentiments being expressed by Jesus. Here, He holds them accountable for not even knowing the time of His arrival, when it was so precisely predicted by their prophet Daniel. Had they really studied Scripture, and knew all that they claimed to know, they would have realized that the Messiah Jesus had come in the predicted manner and at the predicted time. Knowing this and seeing that there was none other who displayed His perfect credentials, should have compelled them to admit that He surely was the Messiah. However, this verse tells us far more. It speaks of things that “belong unto their peace.” (present tense) What does that mean? This peace belongs to them potentially but cannot be experienced until they acknowledge Him. The peace of which Jesus speaks is the same peace that He speaks of to His church in John 14:27. It is not the peace that world gives, it is the godly peace that passes all understanding. It is the peace translated from the Greek word “eirene”, which is the peace that will make them “at one again” with Him!

Clearly this peace for the Jews is a reference to the millennium period, or the equivalent, which would have come much sooner, had they acknowledged Him. This speaks of the time when they will finally enjoy the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, and be God’s eternally blessed people. Had they acknowledged their Messiah, that fulfillment would not have been put on hold for 2000 years. It would have taken place much sooner. It is plausible that after Jesus’ death and resurrection, by which He made entrance to the kingdom of God possible, the 70th week of Daniel would have commenced at that time, and continued to its end, absent any tribulation. During these seven years, great evangelizing of both Jews and Gentiles would have occurred, as it will occur during those seven years that are yet to come. From a spiritual perspective, perhaps this would have quickly accomplished all that the 2000 years of the church age has provided.

Because they failed to admit to His Messiahship, both the truth of what could have been, and even what would be, was hidden from them. The Luke 19 verses 43 and 44 makes it clear that they will suffer the encompassing and being hurt for “days”, which so far has turned out to be about 2000 years. Significant in this scenario, is the first predicted event, the destruction of the Temple in 70AD as alluded to in verse 44 when it speaks of no stone being left upon another. (Before the Temple burned the vast amount of gold it contained had not yet been removed, and so it melted. In order to retrieve the gold, every part of the Temple was removed stone by stone until the place was leveled.)

From all of this, it is evident that the Jewish authorities blatantly refused to accept Him as Messiah regardless of all of the fulfilled prophecies and the irrefutable evidence that they witnessed as He walked among them. This compounded their great inexcusable sin of biblical ignorance and dogged refusal to recognize the awesome, clear and accurate prediction the Prophet Daniel and others had made regarding the precise time and manner of His arrival. The result was this momentous and tragic historical event. It was the event that changed history. This is reminiscent of the very first event that changed all of history. That was when Adam and Eve brought the first sin into the world.

By now it may again appear certain that I have wandered way too far from the subject of this study, and may even have forgotten what it was. However, as I look back at what I have written, I am wondering if I have gone far enough, or deep enough in detail to be convincing of what follows. The goal of my “wandering” was to provide additional background for what I am about to suggest. To re-cap what has been mentioned earlier, I believe that the kingdom of heaven came into being, and commenced its operation right after Jesus arose from the dead. However, his short speech in the Nazareth synagogue is where Jesus officially declared Himself to be the Messiah. With this statement, Jesus launched His three and half year ministerial career. It was during these years that He chose His Apostles, and certain of His disciples.

These He taught and trained to become those who would be given the earthly responsibility to perpetuate the kingdom of heaven after He physically returned to His

Father's home to sit at His Father's right hand. (Luke 22:19). The Apostles would be given all powers needed to perpetuate the kingdom of heaven. They would never be alone in the task, because He would be guiding all of their thoughts, words and actions. This also applied to those believers who would later carry on the kingdom of heaven commission all the way to the Rapture.

During the 40 days He continued on earth before His ascension He put into their minds and hearts the absolute truth of His divinity, and how they were to achieve His purpose through them. He continues to reign over the kingdom of heaven and will do so until after the Great Throne Judgment when Jesus will return all things to the Father, including Himself. As was already stated by the end of the millennium, all that Jesus sought to accomplish through the kingdom of heaven will be complete. All will need be done will have been done so there will be no reason to remain here any longer. It will be the time to end the existence of this earth and to return "all things" including Himself to the Father.

Obviously God knew all things from the moment of creation. It was the rejection of His Messiahship by corporate Israel that caused the need for the creation of the kingdom of heaven. Again, this rejection is what triggered the Father's giving all creation to Jesus to deal with. Careful examination of Scripture will reveal that after their rejection, Jesus never again spoke in public, except in parables. This was so that only His selected "trainees", the Apostles, would understand Him. He no longer sought to teach or advise those who had rejected Him. As already noted, had they not rejected Him, there would have been no 2000 year gap between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel. Jesus still would have, by some other means, instigated what was His most vital mission, that is His suffering and death for the remission of sins. Also, had He not been rejected, the 70th week of years would have been played out in some manner different than it actually will be, as Scripture tells us with great clarity.

Had He not been rejected, there would have been no need for Him to leave and come back a second time. It is likely that He would have set up the millennium kingdom of

heaven, never having left the earth. Remember, that Scripture makes it clear, that because of their rejection of Him, the Jewish people would not see Him again until they repented and begged for His return. It seems evident that had they not rejected Him, there would have been no reason for Him to have left or for the Jews to await the fullness of time when they would no longer reject Him. God's promise to Mary that Jesus would sit on David's throne, would have been fulfilled right after the 70th week of years, which would have immediately followed the 69th year. In that case there would have been no need for the Great Tribulation, and so all seven years could have been peaceful, and used most efficiently for intense teaching, and drawing all who would, both Jews and Gentiles to the faith and to salvation.

Instead, by God's permitted will, Satan, through his antichrist, will be permitted to effectually "call most of the shots" during those seven years. Even so, God will have His 144,000 Jewish evangelists working mightily and effectively to bring millions to salvation. "What might have been" could be a good title to a biblically based fiction movie that would elaborate on what here has only been touched on. In such a story there would not be 2000 years of persecution, wars, genocides, starvation, plagues, etc. What all of this indicates is again summarized as follows:

1. The kingdom of heaven was given by the Father God, and set up as Jesus' personal realm of authority for the purpose of bringing all souls "who would" to salvation, and for the ministering to the Jewish people who for 483 years had been led astray from their ordained purpose as revealed in Daniel 9. In addition to His mission to pay the price for all sins, and to prove that He was the Messiah, His mission was to put the Jews on the evangelic path they had been given, while yet seven years remained of this mandate. It was this rejection of His Messiahship by His own people that necessitated the bifurcation of the universal kingdom of God into the spiritual-only kingdom of God and the earth-bound kingdom of heaven.
2. To do what He came for, He needed to first provide compelling evidence proving that He was the Messiah. This was needed in order to get their full enthusiastic

- commitment to follow Him in fulfilling the mandate as outlined in Daniel 9. This could only happen if they acknowledged that He was the suffering servant Messiah that the prophets had predicted
3. For any of this to be spiritually beneficial, He first came as He had to, as the suffering Messiah. In this capacity, it was ordained that He should die to allow for the cleansing of sins, as predicted in Daniel 9. Had they not rejected Him, then shortly after His resurrection, He would have become the ruling King Messiah, again as the prophets had predicted. In this scenario, He wouldn't have had to leave the earth and then come back after 2000 years of compounded tragedies, pain and suffering. Because the Jew rejected Him this scenario never happened.
 4. Because the Jews rejected Him, a totally different plan was followed which is well presented in the New Testament, and the many Old Testament prophesies. God knew they would reject Jesus. Therefore there was no point in dealing further with what might have been, but only in predicting what would be.
 5. It was due to the rejection of Jesus that 1Corinthians 15:24-28 was implemented. This rejection which caused a 2000 year extension of time within which all things would be completed, presented the need for a different end time scenario.
 6. Again, that difference precipitated the need for a several millennium long kingdom of heaven. This became manifest when God the Father give to God the Son all of creation as 1 Corinthians 15 tells us. This is the way it stands today. The kingdom of heaven is the on-going work-in-progress place where those who put their trust in Christ Jesus, are redeemed and become eligible for residency in the spiritual kingdom of God, a place where sin does not exist. It will be their home until Jesus returns at His second coming. He will then bring them back to earth in their incorruptible bodies to live here and serve Him for the next 1000 years.
 7. In the fullness of time when Jesus will have accomplished this mission, He will, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 15:28, close down the kingdom of heaven and return all things to the Father. What Jesus was given was a hopelessly condemned world from which all would suffer eternal damnation. Having taken unto Himself, all sins of the world, He paid in full for these sins through His

suffering and death so that all who believed in Him could escape the deserved eternal damnation. It was only after He has saved all who will seek to be saved, to the very end of the millennium, that His work will be finished. With His work finished, He will returned to the kingdom of God. Thus God's kingdom was again a universal, fully cleansed kingdom, and Jesus will be back to be one with the Father.

8. To again repeat, it was the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah that caused the Father to put all things under His Son's control, and that this occurred shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection. In order to put this in human terms, we should for the moment, put God's foreknowledge of all things aside. From our perspective, it seems reasonable that we begin to realize what this one mad act would cause. It was literally an earth-shaking tragedy, that would take several millenniums to overcome. Because God could foresee all of the ensuing difficulties, it made eminent sense to create this kingdom of heaven here on earth to which He transferred all things to His Son to deal with. Jesus, who was the Son of Man, as well as the Son of God, was, of course ideally prepared to provide that service.

It seems likely that Pentecost was when this expanded kingdom of heaven first became visibly operative. With the sin-filled creation removed from what had been the universal kingdom of God, and transferred to Jesus' kingdom of heaven, the quest for the removal of sin from all who would trust in Jesus, became the great mission of the kingdom of heaven. That has been its work-in-process for 2000 years and will continue to be until the end of the millennium. The separation of creation from the kingdom of God was caused so that it could be the sin-free refuge and home for all saved souls, who upon physical death would leave the sin-filled earth and take their ordained place in God's sinless domain, just as Jesus promised His disciples when He was about to return to heaven (John 14:12) The kingdom of heaven would be and is where Jesus' disciples continue to the teaching of Scripture, providing compelling testimony and guiding those willing, to come to the saving faith.

For one more insight regarding the issue of synonymity, let's look way back to Daniel 2:44a which says, "*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed:...*" It would be well to read the whole of Chapter 2 so as to get the context, the flavor, the relevance and the full meaning of this verse. This is the vision given to Daniel as he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream. While Daniel was not given the name Jesus, nor that there would be a millennium period within which this would occur, we can safely conclude from the context that this was the kingdom, which he visualized. Daniel described the final world empire, the kingdom of heaven in which king Jesus, having returned from heaven, will sit on the throne of David as foretold to Mary.

While this does not directly address the issue of synonymity in broader time frame, it does make evident that there will be an end-time kingdom that will differ from God's celestial kingdom. What Daniel is seeing is the final segment of the Jesus' kingdom of heaven, which will occur during the millennium. On the basis of this, a few scholars have admitted that there will be a kingdom under Jesus here on earth during the millennium, while the Father's kingdom remains as a separate kingdom in heaven. The 1 Corinthians 15 reference make this undeniable. Where this study differs is that this separate kingdom of heaven began right after Jesus' resurrection. And thus the kingdom of heaven has continued to remain separate to this day and will continue so to the end of this world.

Now we must discuss the mystery parables three of which along with other parables, seem to "prove" synonymity. Up to this point, in our study, it seems evident that the case for two distinct kingdoms has included some compelling evidences to support it. Nevertheless, the synonymity biased reader, because of these parables, has not yet been convinced to believe otherwise. Therefore, these parables must be examined most carefully in order to determine whether or not they do indisputably support synonymity. If the two kingdom premise is correct, there should be evidence in these parables to permit such a conclusion. We should be able to find clues regarding how the parables

can be interpreted to support the premise. This along with the argument presented above should be sufficient to prove the case for the two kingdoms.

To help with this, I prayed and pondered for nearly a year for some way, perhaps some analogy or parallel that could help be convincing that “alike” is not synonymity. What has come to me is to compare the banana with a plantain. (Now you must be sure that I’ve lost it.) The less you know about the plantain before you read this, the more likely you’ll see the significance of this parallel. As I sit here, writing this, I have in front of me a banana and a plantain. Here is a list of the visual characteristics that make them appear to be identical, that is that both are bananas. On the other hand, if we had been exposed only to plantains and never had seen a banana, then the conclusion would be that both are plantains.

1. They come from trees, in big clusters the same as bananas.
2. To the casual eye each plantain looks in every way like a banana, except it is usually, but not necessarily, somewhat larger, and seem to have a more rugged skin.
3. They are the same green color before they ripen.
4. They grow in a crescent shape with the geometrics of the crescent visually identical to that of a banana.
5. As they ripen, they first turn yellow just like bananas, and then turn black like a banana.
6. They smell like the banana, only slightly less pungent.

It is likely that the first time anyone from our northern climate encounters a plantain, the reaction will be similar to mine and to others on whom I’ve tested this analogy. I saw it, as just a big banana, and absent any other information other than my own observations, I was certain that it was just a larger than normal banana. “Common Sense” tells you that if it grows like a banana, is precisely shaped like a banana, if it follows the same patterns of colors from raw to ripe as a banana, and it smells like a banana, then it must be a banana, says the attorney for the synonymity case! Now, the plantain has been tried for being a banana in the court of superficial observation, and has been found guilty! Case

closed! But wait, cries the plantain's attorney. You haven't heard the evidence attesting to the fact that a plantain is not a banana. I can prove to you that while it has these identical characteristics and is closely related to a banana, it is not a true banana! The banana and the plantain are not synonymous words describing the same plant, just as the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are not synonymous. The following are some of the ways which they are different:

1. While the banana and the plantains are both of the herbaceous plant genus "musa." The banana is of the musa "acriminata", the plantain is of the musa "paradisiaco." So also are the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven of the same genus called the "Triune Godhead," and have similar, but different functions.
2. The banana is a sweet fruit ready to eat when it is ripe. It needs no preparation. The plantain however, is essentially not edible until properly prepared by cooking. There is no preparation involved in the kingdom of God. Preparation of those in the kingdom of God took place before they got there. The kingdom of heaven is itself the place of that preparation. The plantain cannot become a banana. However, the idea of requiring cooking (trial by fire) is certainly suggestive of what happens to those who accept Jesus and take on the preparation provided in the kingdom of heaven for eligibility to ascend into the kingdom of God.
3. The banana is a dessert fruit while the plantain is a staple food. It is rated as the tenth most consumed staple food in the world, behind corn, wheat, rice, barley, soy, etc. Its place in a meal is similar to rice or potatoes. Well now, isn't that a sort of "coincidence?" The kingdom of God is the eternal dessert that all who pass through the kingdom of heaven's growing-in-the-faith process? And the kingdom of heaven is the place where the Word of God is the meal that nourishes the soul, and prepares it to move on to the dessert, which is eternal life in the kingdom of God.
4. A green banana is generally not edible, nor is one that has turned black. The plantain however, is very versatile, and can be eaten at any stage of ripeness, from green to black. With proper cooking it is nutritious at any stage of development.

Isn't the kingdom of heaven quite similar? The kingdom of heaven is the place where everyone, regardless of what the world has done to them, or what stage of life they are in, whether it be green or ripe can be spiritually nourished and become eligible to enter the kingdom of God.

Here is another observation that I ran across a while back that might have some bearing in how all of us at times tend to reason, or mis-reason. It has been observed that a fundamental error in logic sometimes occurs, which is called "assuming the consequences." This can be expressed by this example. If A, then B. If B is true, then A is true. An example would be: If it has rained (A), we observe and know that the ground is wet (B). Therefore, when we see that the ground is wet (B), we feel that we can safely conclude that it must have rained (A). The flaw in this logic is easy to recognize in this simple example, but not necessarily so in other circumstances such as that regarding the kingdom parables. In this example, the flaw is in the assumption that because the ground is wet, it must have rained. Clearly this is not necessarily true in every case, because there can be other reasons that the ground is wet.

Likewise, because a parable is descriptive of the kingdom of heaven as well as the kingdom of God, does not prove that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are one and the same. The reason that some so doggedly believe in synonymity of the kingdoms is that they start with, and draw their conclusions only from the parables. For many, this is because, taken by themselves absent the prerequisite of understanding just what the kingdoms are, the parables, if not examined very closely seem to prove the point. This seems to preclude the need to dig any deeper into why in Scripture God saw fit to express things this way. To conclude synonymity solely on such a basis is not in keeping with sound exegesis because it fails to acknowledge the innate precision and accuracy of God's Word. Let me try again to express this analogy in a way that perhaps is more relevant. If I describe some aspects of A and then describe certain aspects of B in exactly the same way, does that prove that A's and B's are the exact same thing? No. All it proves is that the selected list of characteristics used in describing A are characteristic that also describe B, such as in the banana / plantain analogy.

Isn't it evident that Jesus prepared a whole list of characteristics that describe His kingdom of heaven when He spoke through Matthew, and another list of characteristics describing the kingdom of God when He spoke thorough Mark and Luke? The fact that a few of the characteristics of each kingdom are the same, or similar to one another, does not negate the fact that they are two different kingdoms! From the listed evidence, absent any other, along with our God-given common sense given all the above, does it really make sense to conclude with conviction, that we have two names for the same kingdom? We can't, unless we have a deep rooted bias resulting from a long standing presumption of synonymy that has caused blindness to any other possible conclusion. What follows is clear and compelling evidence that the parables do not support the argument for synonymy. Recognizing that there seems to be no serious challenge to the synonymy presumption anywhere else in expository biblical literature that I have found, certainly adds significantly to one's bias and level of comfort in believing the vast majority's conclusion that they are synonymous. On the other hand, as noted above, it is a discomfort to me that I seem to stand alone in this matter. This is because as yet I have found no other biblical expositors to support my contention.

So what does all this prove? Nothing, unless, you are willing to relate the analogy to the parables that seem to "prove" synonymy and look without bias at the evidences that follows:

Before we begin, let us recognize that only Matthew lists all seven parables which our Lord called "...*the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven...*" (Matthew 13:11) They are all recorded in Matthew 13:1-50 as relating to the kingdom of heaven. Only three of the seven are found in the other Gospels as relating to the kingdom of God. Here are the seven along with where they appear in Scripture:

- A. The Sower - Matthew 13:2-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15
- B. The Tares Among the Wheat - Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43
- C. The Grain of a Mustard Seed - Matthew 13:31, 32, Mark 4:30-32, Luke 13:18, 19
- D. The Leaven - Matthew 13:33, Luke 13:20, 21
- E. The Hidden Treasures - Matthew 13:44

F. The Pearl - Matthew 13:45, 46

G. The Dragnet - Matthew 13:47-50

Only three of these (A, C, and D) are mentioned as applying to both kingdoms.

Now we will examine each of these to the extent that seems necessary in order to establish their relevance to the kingdom with which they have been identified.

A. The Parable of the Sower:

Some commentaries consider this as the “mother” of all of the mysteries parables because it opened the door to an understanding of the other “mysteries.”

Jesus, through Matthew 13:3-23 describes this as one of the seven mysteries of the kingdom of heaven parables, while through Luke in 8:5-15 and Mark 4:3-20, this parable is said to describe the kingdom of God. Surely, this appears to present a compelling case for the synonymity argument. Although a simple reading of the three recordings of Jesus’ words, it may at first seem to do little to weaken this argument, a close examination of their subtle differences, and also of the context of each, will yield some surprising results. The word “mystery” is only found in the New Testament. Its first mention is here in Matthew 13 as it relates to these parables. In Matthew it clearly applies to the kingdom of heaven. In Mark and Luke it clearly applies to the kingdom of God. Let’s first see how it applies to the kingdom of heaven.

The sower of the Word is Jesus, and the sowing represents the work-in-progress within His kingdom of heaven. If we recognize that this represents four sowings of equal amounts of “seeds,” we see that this work in the kingdom of heaven may be only 25% fruitful. That 25% is extremely fruitful in its preparation of soul / spirits who are to be sent “up to” the kingdom of God. The “sowing” in this parable represents the initial sowing of the Word by Jesus Himself. The 25% that is the very fruitful include, the apostles and disciples who would themselves be fruitful after Jesus’ ascension. Their fruitfulness would continue to be expressed by the on going

work-in-progress of the kingdom of heaven. It is of course, Jesus who set up this enterprise of salvation in the kingdom of heaven. He was the Founder and through His blood.

He financed it completely and “in perpetuity”, thus assuring its continuance until His return. From then on He Himself will personally complete the work and sit on David’s earthly throne for 1,000 years. While His blood was payment in full for the salvation of all mankind, only a few chose to accept this gift of salvation. These are the few of which Jesus speaks later in Matthew 22:14 when He said, “*For many are called, but few are chosen.*” The “choosing” had to be mutual. Those whom He chose were those who genuinely chose Him through their own Spirit-guided volition. We might say that it was those who had the “fertile ground,” where the Word was successfully planted. All redeemed souls do their “internship” work in the flesh here, in the earthbound kingdom of heaven, before passing on to the spiritual kingdom of God.

In the first segment of the kingdom of heaven, prior to the Rapture, the work-in-progress goes on through the efforts of disciples in the roles of teachers, pastors, and the army of witnesses that extol Him and His incredible achievement on the Cross. The Holy Spirit, who indwells each of these, is the heavenly “official” who gives spiritual strength, and supervises the work from within the hearts of all “interns”. For each participating soul, the indwelling Holy Spirit, is the evidence of a successful effort. However, the “documents” attesting to the redemption of each of the saved are sent up to the throne room of God, where the Head of Operations, our Mediator and Intercessor, our Lord and, Savior, and Master Christ Jesus, provides the final validation before the souls are deemed eligible to enter the kingdom of God. All of this, as expressed here in the worldly vernacular, may or may not be as it really is. It is simply my vision of how all of this might be going on.

The reader might do well to prayerfully muse for himself or herself on this matter, with the above as a possible starting point. At the very least, the fact is that presently,

Jesus sits on the Fathers throne, and will remain there, in the kingdom of God, supervising “in absentia” until the end of this current work-in-progress portion of His kingdom of heaven “project” is completed. He does not sit there disinterested and not an active participant in what is going on within the corporate structure He established on earth. While there, in the kingdom of God, one of His well-known “jobs” is to defend saved souls from Satan’s accusations. Jesus is the founder and very active Chairman of the Board of that corporate structure known as the kingdom of heaven. Another one of Jesus’ activities will be to greet and judge the quality of the earthly works of each soul/spirit that is delivered to the kingdom of God. This “portion” of the kingdom of heaven will be complete at the end of the tribulation. Of course, prior to this, the Rapture will be the end of that portion of the kingdom of heaven, which we call the Church Age.

The fourth sowing in this parable was the only one that was fruitful in providing saved souls, that is the eligibility for entry to the kingdom of God. It was therefore reasonable for the other Gospel writers whose missions were related to the kingdom of God, to consider only that which was going on in the fruitful soil from which those would come who would reside in the kingdom of God. If we admit to the two kingdom premise, it is clear that the whole parable does, in certain ways, easily apply to each kingdom. What is seen from the perspective of Mark and Luke is simply a more detailed example of how “many are called but few are chosen.” Mark and Luke were chosen to report only on the “chosen” aspect of the parable. We can see that the soul preparation occurs in the kingdom of heaven and then the soul goes to the kingdom of God. This makes Mark and Luke’s kingdom of God claims and Matthew kingdom of heaven claims equally viable.

Perhaps the above additional description of the kingdom of heaven may seem to be somewhat tangential to our immediate task. However, it provides further background understanding of what Jesus is doing, and has been doing, these last 2000 years. Now to specifics. First let us make a rough comparison of what the content and context of each rendition of the parable may tell us.

- In Matthew, Jesus speaks of this parable as applying to the mystery of the kingdom of heaven.
- In both Mark and Luke Jesus speaks of the parable as applying to the mystery of the kingdom of God.
- The message of the parable and its explanation seem to be essentially the same in all three Gospels. However, there are differences of significant magnitude to refute their synonymity. For instance, Verse 12 and 17 of the Matthew version, clearly apply to the kingdom of heaven only, and would have been inappropriate had they also been in the kingdom of God versions. Therefore they are omitted in these kingdom of God versions. We will discuss this later. However this fact should raise the rebel flag up onto the ramparts for all to recognize. The rebel flag symbolizes the rebellion against synonymity!
- In the last verse of the Matthew 13:23 version, Jesus notes that *“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understand it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundred fold some sixty, some thirty.”*
- In Mark 4:20, Jesus speaks of *“And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty and some a hundred.”* There, the rations are received!
- In Luke, Jesus speaks of when the Word is in good ground, that is those who are *“honest and of good heart,”* those who have heard the Word and keep it, will bring forth fruit with patience. In Luke 8:8 he reports that the yield was 100-fold.
- According to Matthew, Jesus appears to recite this parable right after the episode when Jesus asked the rhetorical question about who His family was. (Matthew 12:48) After the sower parable, Jesus recites the other 6 mystery parables, and then according to Mathew, returns to Nazareth. (verses 53, 55) Mark records the events preceding the parable in the same

sequence (Mark 3:35). However, after reciting just 3 more parables, he claims that Jesus, on the same day, took the boat to the other side of the lake. (4:35) This strongly suggests that Matthew and Mark, at least in this case, were witnesses to two different events, where Jesus delivered essentially the same, messages yet different in their application. To Matthew, it was the kingdom of heaven message at one event and in Mark it was the kingdom of God message at another event.

- In both the Matthew and Mark versions, Jesus spoke from an off shore boat. However, in Mark 4:1 it says that Jesus began again to teach by the sea side from the boat. This is strong evidence that Jesus spoke from the boat more than once. Every parable that refers to both the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God, is the result of Jesus having delivered these messages each at a different event. Also each message was “tailored” specifically to describe one or the other of the kingdoms. He probably spoke many times of these kingdoms.
- Luke records the “family” message as occurring after the sower parable, and after the “light candle” parable. (Luke 8:16-18) This again is indicative of yet another event.

There are other evidences of different sequences of time within which this parable seems to have been spoken. However, the above is certainly enough to establish the fact that the parable was given more than once, to different audiences at different times. This helps explain the fact that Jesus recited it as expressing the kingdom of heaven where Matthew heard it, and He spoke of it as expressing the kingdom of God, where Mark and Luke heard it. The fact that this parable appears differently in the line of events recorded by Matthew as compared with when it occurred in Mark and Luke, also indicates that it was a topic of which Jesus spoke at least three times, and probably many times during His itinerant preachings. As we examine the parable in detail we find that when Jesus referred to the kingdom of God it was tailored fit as referring to that kingdom when He spoke of the kingdom of heaven it was tailored to fit as referring to that kingdom.

Regarding the examination of content, as was noted above, Matthew's kingdom of heaven version of Jesus' explanation of this parable of the sower contains two verses that are absent in Mark's and Luke's kingdom of God versions. This, I believe, is because verses 12 and 17 in Matthew 13 can only apply to the kingdom of heaven and would be inappropriate if they had been put in the kingdom of God version. In verse 12 we read: *"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."* What this is saying is that God dispenses His gifts on those who appreciate them, but takes them away from those who fail to appreciate them, and or refuse to use them to His glory. The promise to those, who have true grace, and use what they have been given, is that they shall have more in abundance. For the others, it is simply use it or lose it. This punishment / reward admonition would have no place in the spiritual kingdom of God, but is a very appropriate item of concern in the work-in-progress kingdom of heaven.

In verse 17 of Matthew 13 we read: *"For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."* Why was this omitted from the kingdom of God versions of the parable explanation? The ancients had a good knowledge of the kingdom of God, especially in its earlier form when it contained all of creation which we may now call the universal kingdom of God. However, in those days there was no way possible that they could know of the future division of this into an earthly kingdom of heaven and a purely spiritual kingdom of God. They knew that the faithful would be rewarded in eternity, but they didn't know how Jesus' death, and His ensuing kingdom of heaven operation would be an essential part of their total spiritual restoration. Through Psalms 2 and 23 along with Isaiah 52 and 53 and many other prophetic "hints" that some wondered and hungered for explanations of what these meant. It was only Jesus' coming that would fulfill that desire.

Finally in terms of the differences in content of the three versions of this parable, let us examine the seemingly minor differences found in the description of the fruitfulness of

the sowing. The great precision of God's Word suggests a deviation from that precision to be another "remez" to be looked into.

As already noted, Matthew, in verse 23 speaks of the fruitful sowing as returning fruit 100, 60 and 30 fold. Mark calls it 30, 60 and 100 fold, while Luke mentions that it brought forth fruit 100-fold. What is going on here? Why this reversal of the amounts of fruitfulness as reported by Matthew and Mark? Does it have anything to do with the different kingdoms issue? There is no doubt that this is another of those things that is worthy of a deeper look than simply assuming that it's just another "one of those things". As we noted above, God doesn't work that way. It probably has to do with Matthew's and Mark's perspectives in terms of which kingdom they were viewing.

If, instead of looking at this as indicating random variations in fruitfulness, and consider it more as a prediction of "soul crop" yields over the life of the church, we may find something quite interesting. Perhaps Matthew, in viewing the kingdom of heaven in the context of being the work-in-progress kingdom of heaven and, he saw the early and great proliferation of saved souls after Pentecost, and during the years when the Apostles were most active, and after that when the church was growing at a faster rate than was the "world" population. He may have seen this as the "hundred fold" time when great strides in fruitfulness were being made spreading God's Word all over the known world. Then perhaps it was also given for him to see the huge increase in world population and how Satan became even more proficient in planting "tares" and putting "consuming fowls in the air." These would become increasingly effectual within the visible church toward the end of the church age. This would translate to an ever increasing percentage of non-Christians and of those who were only professors of the faith, and a diminishing percentage of true possessors of the faith.

The end times are upon us, as all evidence seems to indicate. The evidence also indicates that the rate of fruitfulness of God's Word is rapidly diminishing as Satan's influence through false teachers and false religions proliferate. These are all easier to believe and adhere to compared with Christianity. It would be fair to say that in these times, many are

called but fewer and fewer are chosen, is ever more appropriate! Then we have the “zero point” of “chosen” as it is expressed by the phrase when “...*the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*” (Luke 21:24). This is describing the point in time when the diminishing number of saved souls will have passed downward from thirty fold on its way to where it will reach zero. This will be the end of this church age phase of fruitfulness within the kingdom of heaven. Perhaps this diminishing return is what Matthew was given to see and report on in this verse. Of course, this is speaking of the end of the church age, and the moment when Jesus will bring His church, the true Body of Christ, home through the advent we call the Rapture.

There is, I believe, a widespread misconception today regarding the current growth of the “church”. That it’s growing may yet be true in absolute numbers of professing Christians, but it is surely shrinking greatly as a percentage of the total world population and also as the number of truly redeemed Christians. An in-depth examination of many of our modern churches will reveal a ghastly departure from the true faith and into big time heresy and apostasy. This has resulted in the large growth of professing pew sitters and, an ever shrinking total number of saved souls appropriately called the “remnant”. It seems to be true of the majority of churches, but it is even more so of the mega churches, which profess Christ, but in ways biblically blasphemous and heretical.

In these last days, as if all of these failures were not sufficient, the deadly virus called ecumenism is now also infecting large numbers of the highly respected “biblical” church leaders, and therefore also, their congregations. This plague, is not only leading many into hell, but it is also helping to advance the establishing of the one world religion for the benefit of the coming antichrist. Furthermore, if this is going on so blatantly in front of us, what’s going on in the less visible areas, say in the “missionary” fields? If Satan is able to so badly pervert and subvert the church system that is here and visible, what is he able to do out of our sight? However, knowing what Scripture tells us about him, that his influence is deep within certain portions of the missionary structure, especially the largest one, where Rome and its spinoffs are involved. This is also in keeping with his much more widely recognized program of persecution of saints in many regions of the world.

Finally, to cap this point, consider China. The political structure of this most populated nation on earth is blatantly godless communism. Having adopted a brand of capitalistic economic structure, and a touch of pseudo-democracy, which by the way, is the only type of democracy in the world today, they have become, in many ways, the most powerful nation on earth. We hear many glowing reports about the great Christian reformation taking place there. We also hear, read and see evidence of huge Christian churches springing up in many places, and people free to attend them to express their faith. Each of these churches is government sanctioned and therefore government controlled, regardless of whether or not this fact is generally realized.

Recognizing this to be true, one must realize that these churches are authorized and allowed to exist by the completely godless Communist power that controls them politically, and that hates all religions, especially Christianity. This leads one to the conclusion that there is something most cleverly subtle, and diabolically sinister going on there. Could it be that in these “churches” there is a most subtle pseudo-Christianity being preached that is deceiving vast numbers of eager to be saved, trusting, but sadly naive souls? The fact that throughout China, Christians meeting in small groups to actually study the Bible are being systematically persecuted and imprisoned, is evidence enough to show that the government’s “church” agenda does not allow the essential biblical truths to be heard. The saving of souls is the very antithesis of any godless control structure as has been demonstrated throughout the world for centuries. Here we see on a massive scale, Satan at his clever best, having brought his deceiving ways to the very worst level.

We can see how Matthew, having been given to report these unique insights about the kingdom of heaven, in its work-in-progress nature, would have seen the progress of fruitfulness ultimately diminishing toward that end-time climax, the Rapture. On the other hand, the expansion of world population may have, for a while, caused the total number of saved souls to grow, even though the ratio of the saved to the total population has greatly declined.

Mark concluded that the number of souls entering the kingdom of God was for many years ever increasing, say from 30 fold, upward even though its proportion to the total population was, decreasing. He was only reporting the early increasing percentage of fruitfulness, from within a total population growing at a slower rate. From that perspective, he would not have seen the difficulties encountered in the workings of the kingdom of heaven, or the ever decreasing ratio of saved souls. He looked only toward the Kingdom of God, and so his view was limited to the accumulating effect of those who were chosen, and who did enter that kingdom. Mark, it seems, was not given the full spectrum vision that was given to Matthew, so he only reported the earlier increasing growth. Perhaps also he may have seen the church growth during the 18th and 19th century's period characterized by the great revival. Even this was proportionally small when viewed from the whole world perspective. He was not given to see beyond this "hundred-fold" period where the number of saved souls began to wind down toward the Rapture. Luke doesn't get into numbers or predictions. He simply sees that those who are "honest and of good heart" who keep the Word and are patient, will attain the kingdom of God.

What does this content/context analysis prove? It revealed something very important and equally glorious that is seldom if ever caught by most Bible students. Being aware of this, can be immensely helpful when we seek to learn from, and apply, Jesus' words. As noted above, the only way that this and many other differences of reporting, as found in the Gospels, could have happened, and the only way they could have recorded His words differently, is that each writer, in many cases, was led to record a similar speech given by our Lord at different times and in different places during His missionary journeys. This is a very important point, because it goes far in explaining many other "inconsistencies" and textural differences in His recorded speeches. Nevertheless, this was all planned perfectly by Jesus Himself, as both the living inerrant Preacher.

The Bible is God's inerrant and precise Word. Every word written in it was authored by God. While each writer was allowed to apply his own writing style, each had absolutely

no liberty to interpret God's messages, or the words by which He chose to express them. What we see is that God chose His Words from within their own respective vocabularies. If God was not the Author of every Word, then we would have no reason to believe in its inerrancy. We would not have the rock solid foundation on which to base our faith and understanding of what is truth in absolute terms. Most serious born-again Bible students know this. However, it is our fallible human limitations that cause us to often credit the messenger instead of the Author. Twice in the Book of Revelation, as an example, we read that John forgot himself and got down on his knees to worship the messenger angel for the wonderful message he received. That Jesus delivered the message slightly differently in different places was His sovereign privilege and most certainly He had a specific purpose in doing so. It was not given to the recorders to write anything but His exact Words! They didn't need a photographic memory, or to be able to write short hand, or even to have done their writing while, or immediately after, He had spoken. The Holy spirit was always there to make certain that what they wrote, whenever or wherever they wrote it, the words would be what they had been given by God to record. And so it is with the parables.

Scripture tells us that Jesus spoke in every city and town throughout Galilee and along the way to Jerusalem. Therefore it is evident that He repeated His messages, including the parables, many times to different audiences. He didn't read from prepared script. He spoke from His heart with a complete foreknowledge understanding of every word and the meaning He chose to convey. We should recall that of the three, only Matthew was an apostle. Because of this we may rightly believe that he was with Jesus far more of the time than any non-apostle could have been. Mark held no official position among the original twelve. Many Bible scholars believe that Mark was the son of a rich godly widow named Mary in whose home the Apostles often met. It seems very likely then that Mark was the rich young man who came to Jesus asking how he could be saved. (Matthew 19:16-22)

Somewhere along the way, Mark became a disciple, and possibly did personally witness some of Jesus teachings. As far as is known Luke never knew Jesus as a living man. His

writings, as he admitted, were all from careful research of records and the words of eye witnesses. Both men were close to Peter and, many believe that Peter was a major source of each of their writings. It is generally believed that all three, as well as John, finalized the official versions of their Gospels in the 50's or 60's, twenty to thirty years after Jesus' crucifixion. There are a few who suggest that John wrote his Gospel in the 90's AD after he "returned" from heaven. In the final analysis, none of this matters. Every Word is there by the direct prompting of the Holy Spirit and is therefore perfectly accurate in its substance and purpose. What is presented in the Holy Writ is immune to any limitations, weakness or failures that might be assigned to these recorders of Jesus' Words.

We can summarize all of this by simply recognizing that much, and perhaps most of what Jesus is quoted as having said in these Gospels is a spirit-selected sampling or composite of Jesus' many teaching sessions through which He blessed many as He passed through the various cities and towns during His ministry. (Luke 13:22) Again, that one writer recorded them differently than another is explained by the fact that one recorded what was said in one town while the other recorded what was said in another place. Each recorded what they were given to hear at different presentations of Jesus' many teaching sessions. We must also conclude that when Jesus recited a parable and labeled it as applying to the kingdom of God on one occasion, and as relating to the kingdom of heaven on another occasion, He spoke specifically as it applied to that kingdom. He meant exactly what He said in its application to the particular kingdom about which He spoke. Jesus wasn't using these two terms randomly, or as being the same kingdom.

B. The Parable of the Tares Among the Wheat:

This parable is found only in Matthew 13 verse 13: 24-30, and 36-43. Why is it not found in any of the other Gospels? Because, as Jesus explains it in verse 36-43, it is an end time parable, which applies to, and is descriptive of, His and only His earthly kingdom of heaven during the final days! In both verses 39 and 40 Jesus refers this separation as taking place at the "*end of the world.*" There will be no separation of good and evil in the kingdom of God, because there can be no evil in the kingdom of

God to separate. That is why it wouldn't have been appropriate for it to be spoken of as a likeness to the kingdom of God. In this case, the wheat is not the Word as it is in the first parable. Instead it is the saved souls, the true possessors of the faith. The tares are the look-a-likes, the rebels and mere professors of the faith who will pretend, or falsely believe that they are redeemed. Many of them will be part of Satan's army that will make the final assault against Jesus near the end of the millennium. The parable concludes with what happens to these two factions. God's seed will come into the kingdom of their Father, that is the kingdom of God, while Satan's seed, the tares will be eternally burned.

Notice also how closely the kingdom of heaven, as described in the parable of the dragnet relates to this end time parable. (Matthew 13:49) Because neither applies to the kingdom of God, neither is included in the other Gospels. Is there any doubt that this is also speaking of the white throne judgment that takes place at the end of this world, after Christ's 1000 years of millennial rule, which is singularly His kingdom of heaven? Think about it! Perhaps the apostles were incapable of understanding this parable even after He explained it. However, having the whole of Scripture to draw from, it should be evident that in this parable, we have been given a clear distinction between Jesus' earthly work-in-progress kingdom of heaven, and the Father's saved-souls-only kingdom of God. Certainly there is no hint here of the two kingdoms being synonymous. The parable makes sense only when we recognize that these are two distinct kingdoms, that is the Son's kingdom that the Father gave Him, and the Father's spiritual kingdom, that is the kingdom of God. If one is truly seeking to understand all of this with an open mind, then it seems that one must begin to realize that God was very precise and selective when He chose to assign each of these several parables to applying to either the kingdom of God or to the kingdom of heaven.

C. The Parable of the Mustard Seed:

This parable is found in Matthew as being like the kingdom of heaven and in Mark and Luke as being like the kingdom of God. The Matthew, Mark, and Luke versions provide essentially the same message with but one seemingly “minor” exception. Also, the wording is sufficiently different so as to conclude that they each recorded it at a different lecture. It appears that the basic intent of this parable is to show the very small beginning of the church, and how it has grown over the ages. It exists in the kingdom of heaven, first as a small “tree,” consisting mostly of the redeemed souls eligible to enter the kingdom of God as expressed by the Pentecost event. This is the primary focus of the Mark and Luke versions. We could say that Jesus’ death, resurrection, and 40 days on earth before His ascension, followed by the arrival of the Holy Spirit to dwell in the redeemed, produced the first group of church saints. These are likened to the first tiny sprout of the great tree that was to grow from the seed.

There was an initial purity in this “tree- church” which made it an appropriate expression of the kingdom of God. This is because each saved, yet living soul, was positionally in the kingdom of God, even though the soul had not yet ascended. However, while the tree grew rapidly, it didn’t continue to grow with the same pure quality with which it began. Satan soon grafted false teachers, and prophets as well as pagan practices on as branches. Satan even sent his agents, the “birds” to take up residence in its branches. Thus, as it grew, the tree no longer symbolized a spiritually pure kingdom-of God-quality church.

After the Father gave all things to Jesus to put all things under His feet, the tree became a mere sprout, consisting only of the apostles and those who came to the faith during His 3 ½ year ministry. As symbolic of the kingdom of heaven, the tree represented the good and evil components of Jesus’ kingdom, and the work of redemption that needed to be done in the kingdom of heaven. This work was to continually fight the evil while seeking to enlarge, and set apart those who became qualified for entry into the kingdom of God. That was the faithful remnant that made up a small but pure and vital portion of that tree. As one can see, the conditions as symbolized were predicted by Jesus. By the time of the Gospel writers, some thirty

years later, each reported, and predicted many times that false teachers, had, and would, corrupt the “church.”

If we now recognize the validity of two different kingdoms, we can understand that the parable can apply to both, depending on what stage of its development we consider. From the kingdom of heaven perspective, the tree represents that grotesques tree (church) that it grew to be. It no longer resembles the true church. From the kingdom of God perspective the “upward flow” of the fruit of the kingdom of heaven work, namely the redeemed souls, is what makes it relevant to the kingdom of God. As noted, today the tree is that grotesque monstrosity called “Christianity” which includes the Catholic Church as well as all of the pseudo “Christian” churches, and those social clubs who merely pretend to be Christ-believing churches. When the “...*times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*” (Luke 21:24) the faithful remnant within the monster will be Raptured to the kingdom of God.

That will end the church age portion of the kingdom of heaven. What will remain immediately after the Rapture will be an amalgamation of the residue left behind, which will then temporarily congeal into the universal church of Satan. This is all that would be left if God had not made provisions for those who will miss the Rapture. During a seven year period after the Rapture, He will assign the 144,000 evangelizing Jews to places all over the world. His angel will also teach the Truth from the air above, and two resurrected men will be assigned to Jerusalem specifically to teach the truth to the Jews. Many see this as the greatest of all revivals ever to have occurred.

There is a slight difference between the Matthew version and the Mark-Luke versions. When Jesus begins reciting the parables, it appears that He did it essentially “non-stop,” as described in Matthew, for we see all seven of the mystery parables revealed continuously one after another. The only interruption recorded in this listing was that after reciting the fourth mystery parable, Jesus sent the multitude away and retired with the Apostles to the house where He continued His teaching by revealing

the last three mystery parables, and explaining the second. Obviously, Jesus had total command of what He would reveal through these seven kingdoms of heaven parables. However, in each case, when we read from the other Gospel writers, we find Jesus prefacing this and the leaven parable with a question. In the Mark 4:30 version of the parable of the mustard seed, He asks “...*Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?*”

The Luke 13:18,19 version begins with “*18...Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it*” (Notice the “we” in Mark’s is an “I” in Luke’s). This is merely evidence of Jesus’ repeated teaching in various places, and heard by Mark in one place and he who instructed Luke (probably Peter) heard elsewhere else. The same question precedes Luke’s version of the leaven. Are these preambles trivial? Nothing is trivial in Scripture. If it is there, it is for a purpose and it has a significant meaning! I classify it as another evidence of something deeper that needs to be understood.

So what can we do with this? There is surely something here to be learned, but what is it? It has something to do with how these two parables are difficult to fully relate to the kingdom of God, especially the leaven. It is only when he relates these two parables as pertaining to the kingdom of God that He seems to have to ponder for a moment. These questions uttered by our Lord as they relate only to the kingdom of God application, have a significance that support the two kingdom premise. Because God knows all things, Jesus didn’t do much “pondering.” His words, as all words found in Scripture were chosen perfectly to mean what they say, and to say what they mean. The question is for us to consider, not Him. It is for us to recognize the difficulty in relating them to the kingdom of God.

D. The Mystery of the Leaven:

We find this parable relating to the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13:33 *“Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”* In Luke it is also portrayed as being like the kingdom of God. Except for a preface in Luke, they are stated identically. As noted, in Luke 13:20, 21 this parable begins with the question, *“...Unto what is the kingdom of God like? And whereunto shall I resemble it?”* (Resemble: from the Greek word “homolios” meaning “similar in appearance and character, resemblance like as, similitude” used here only.) However, again as one would expect, each parable was preached by Jesus at a different location and at a different time. The message is very similar to that of the mustard seed tree.

The spiritual purity of the young tree, that is the early church, which contained saved souls already eligible for the kingdom of God became polluted as it grew. Thus also, did the three measures of meal represent the kingdom of God’s spiritual purity as it relates to the early church, until the woman hid the leaven in them. Leaven always puffs up its host substance, signifying sin. We might consider Satan inserting his puffed up pride in the hearts of many, causing what began as a kingdom-of-God-quality church to become what it is today. Thus the kingdom of heaven had to begin its work of seeking the removal of the leaven from the hearts of all who would believe in Jesus. This kingdom of God version of the leaven parable, begins with a seemingly rhetorical question, not found in the Matthew version. Why? Was Jesus pondering on just how He could apply this parable to the Kingdom of God? His foreknowledge of these things would have precluded that possibility. Instead, as noted regarding the mustard seeds, He was expressing this question for our benefit so that we should do the pondering. Perhaps this question is a subtle sign by Jesus that this parable does not advocate synonymity. If it did so indicate, than there would have been no reason to ponder in expressing the difference.

E. The Mystery of the Hidden Treasure:

This is very clearly an earthly kingdom of heaven message. That is why it does not appear as a kingdom of God message. Who would be found searching for anything in the spiritual kingdom of God? There are several interpretations of this parable, the most common of which appears to be that the sinner finds Christ, and gives up everything he has to gain Him in order to be saved. However, Christ is hardly hidden from anyone, probably being the most known, and surely the least understood person ever to have lived. A sinner can't find the real Jesus by himself simply because he is too blind and unable to seek Him (Romans 3:10, 11.) In this parable, the "man" purchased the whole field which Matthew 13:38 tells us means the whole world. Also it says when he has found the treasure, he hid it again. Does a man who finds Jesus hide him? The message here is that the treasure is not Jesus, but Israel. The nation Israel was provided to the world to evangelize it, a mission in which it failed. Therefore it became a hidden treasure not at all producing what God had intended for it. It is what the "man," that is the Jew Jesus, gave for this precious treasure. He gave all He had, that is His life.

However, Israel rejected Him so He re-buried Israel, a burial that has lasted over 2000 years. For evidence that the treasure speaks of Israel, see Exodus 19:5 where God speaks of Israel as being His "*peculiar treasure*," or Psalm 135 where it again speaks of Israel as His "*peculiar treasure*." It was Christ, the Man who gave His all to purchase the whole world in order to save Israel, even all of scattered Israel (John 11:51, 52). While Jesus died in the cross for the whole world (that's the price the "man" paid for the field"), Isaiah 53:8 says that "*...he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*" Here God is singling out His people as a reason why Jesus had to die. Jesus died for all who would come to believe in Him. Here it is suggesting that He died for Israel in some different way. This is pointing to the fact that the Jews, as a separate people will have a separate dispensation period of redemption from the rest of the world. Viewed another way, the church consisting predominantly of Gentiles, will be saved in a manner a little different than will the Jews be saved, as a nation. Surely the Rapture, and the circumstances surrounding the millennial period of

restored Israel as described in Revelation and by several of the Prophets, confirm that contention. From all of this, it is evident that this is strictly relevant only to the earthly kingdom of heaven.

F. The Mystery of the Pearl:

This is also a parable strictly relevant only to the earthly kingdom of heaven as this kingdom is defined hereinabove. Some interpreters claim that Jesus and His gift of salvation is the pearl. However, a sinner, no matter how great is his wealth, could not purchase Jesus, or his salvation. This parable is parallel to the Treasure parable. However, instead of dealing with Israel as did the previous parable, this one deals with the church. The pearl is the church. Remember pearls were not “Kosher” because they come from shellfish. They were Gentile trinkets that Jews would use in trade with Gentiles but they did not themselves value them as precious jewels. 1Corinthians 10:32 makes clear the distinction between the Jews, the church and the Gentiles.

The characteristics of a pearl as compared with jewels is first, that it is a unity in that it cannot be carved as crystal can. So also is the church a unity, even though it is seemingly divided between mere professors of the faith and possessors of the saving faith. A pearl is the product of creation, probably some painful thing going on inside the shell. That creation process is symbolic of Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross. It is also an indication of the church, which has grown likewise in an atmosphere of continuous suffering. The extraction of the pearl causes the death of the oyster. It was Jesus death, an intensely suffering death on the cross, that made it possible for the church to come into being. The pearl grows gradually as does the church. No one can see the pearl grow, as no one can see the true remnant church grow, because no one knows what is truly in the hearts of those who profess salvation. Again, as is evident, this parable belongs only as a description of the earthly kingdom of heaven and has no application to the kingdom of God.

G. The Mystery of the Dragnet:

It is interesting that this last of the mystery kingdom parables speaks from a different view of the same time period as does the parable of the tares, that is the end of the world. Instead of separating the wheat from the tares, it speaks of separating the good fish, that is the saved, from the bad fish, or the condemned. Again this is clearly an earthly kingdom of heaven operation and so is not considered as applicable to the kingdom of God. That is why none of these last three parables and the one about the tares have any possible relevance or application to the kingdom of God. Simply because these parables are not, and cannot be applied to the kingdom of God, should by itself indicate that there is no synonymy between the two kingdoms?

H. The Rich Man's Difficulties:

We now come to a kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God analogy that seems on the surface to make the strongest case for synonymy. Matthew in 19:23 records Jesus saying, "...*That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" Literally in His next breath is verse 24 where Jesus says, "...*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*" This is not synonymy. It is simply describing in similar ways just how difficult it is for the rich to enter either kingdom. Although these are similar, we should notice, that Jesus speaks of the kingdom of heaven as being something that a rich man can "hardly" enter. That does not indicate that it cannot happen, only that it is very difficult. On the other hand, to get a camel literally through the eye of a needle, is an expression of the impossible. Many have chosen to allegorize the needle-camel analogy, in order to somehow leave hope for the rich. In order to negate the impossibility some claim that even though the main gate is closed the adjacent man's gate can be open and so it is possible for a camel on its knees to hobble through. It is an absurd contrivance by those who need some avenue of escape from the unreasonable alternative.

However, once we realize that these are two distinctly different kingdoms, these biblical statements do not conflict with one another, nor do they express synonymity. We are being told in the kingdom of heaven parable, that to even get a rich man to consider the issue of his eternal destiny, and therefore to seek, or even allow, discipleship and guidance from the accessible earthly kingdom of heaven, is a rare but not impossible event. That being so, and absent his passage through the kingdom of heaven, it is not simply more difficult to enter the kingdom of God, it is impossible.

It is like literally threading a camel through the eye of a sewing needle. That this can't happen is evident, because no one can get to the kingdom of God without first being saved through faith in Jesus, and that is what the kingdom of heaven is all about. We should note that it is not the man's wealth that keeps him from salvation; it is his trust in his wealth, which is the curse that condemns so many of the wealthy. No one can approach, much less enter the kingdom of God unless they realize that they are sinners without hope in desperate need of a Savior. (Revelation 3:17) It is only in the kingdom of heaven where He, Christ Jesus, the needed Savior, can be found. The message being conveyed is that the rich man, while he considers himself rich is actually spiritually destitute and therefore doomed. However, it is not his riches that condemn him. If he will but realize that even with his earthly wealth, he is wickedly poor spiritually and in need of the Savior, his wealth no longer needs to be an obstacle to his salvation. The difficulty comes from the blindness to his spiritual condition that wealth seems to cause. No one enters the kingdom of God without first being prepared (saved) while in the kingdom of heaven, this is what makes his direct entrance into the kingdom of God impossible.

In the society in which Jesus preached, wealth was usually considered an automatic sign of one's salvation. Being rich meant that one was favored by God. The Pharisees seemed to have believed this, as they also did in the idea that they were saved just for having Abraham as an ancestor. By the way, Abraham was one of the richest men of his time. However, his wealth did not get in the way of his faith. In our current times, during this age of the Laodician church, Jesus in Revelation 3:17, chastises those who are

rich in worldly goods, seeing them as wretchedly poor, blind and naked in their spiritual qualities. Part of today's greatest falling away from faith is attributed to earthly wealth which causes a smug, self-satisfaction and therefore no desire or recognizable need for the spiritual wealth that Jesus can provide. Yet He offers them the opportunity to be saved through the process He offers within His earthly kingdom of heaven. Unless the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are two separate kingdoms, why would Jesus provide two different though similar parables assigning to each kingdom its own parable?

The idea that kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are not synonymous seems to be a radical presumption in the eyes of many Bible students. For the reader of this study who has this "fact" firmly established on his or her mind, understandably, cannot help but be very skeptical of any so-called argument or proof that speaks otherwise. I pray that a final summary will be helpful and convincing.

There are approximately 98 New Testament verses that speak of the kingdom of God. None of these are applicable to the kingdom of heaven. Given the manner in which Scripture allows us to define each kingdom, every one of these references to kingdom of God clearly applies to the kingdom of God and does not apply to the kingdom of heaven.

When we examine the other kingdom of heaven references there are a couple that give pause for thought. While it is important to try to understand their meanings, they are not related to the issue of synonymity. One found is in Matthew 5:20 which tells us *"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* What can we do with that?

If there are two different kingdoms as they are described hereinabove, in which one can these Pharisees and Scribes be? They certainly cannot be in the kingdom of God, and if they cannot be in the only other place that exists, that is the kingdom of heaven, then it seems that God has presented us with an impossible situation. Even if there was but one

kingdom (thereby admitting synonymity) the dilemma would be exactly the same! The Pharisees and Scribes would seemingly still be nowhere! Based on our faith trust and knowledge of our Lord's ways through His inerrant Word, we must conclude that the problem is in us, and our failure to properly interpret His Word. The answer to this problem lies in ones interpretation of the nature of the kingdom of heaven. Throughout the preceding pages of this commentary, the kingdom of heaven has been depicted as a place where the objective is to bring everyone to the faith so they will qualify for access to the kingdom of God. Repeatedly, it has been depicted as both a place, that is this whole earth, and also a corporate structure that Jesus created and funded in perpetuity with His blood. The corporation's purpose is to bring all who will unto salvation and thereby become eligible to enter the kingdom of God. Thus there are two aspects of this kingdom of heaven.

If they persist, in their faulty beliefs, the Pharisees and Scribes cannot enter the kingdom of heaven process, even though they are in the earthly physical kingdom of heaven. There is much scriptural precedence for this manner of conclusion. One needs only to read Romans chapter 1 where three times God through Paul tells us that God gives the hopelessly corrupt over to their wicked ways. In other words, through His foreknowledge, He knows that they will never come to repentance, so He simply allows them to live out their lives in abject wickedness rather than waste His, or anyone's time and effort to seek their salvation.

However, doesn't Scripture say that Jesus died for the sins of all of humanity? It also says that God would not have any lost, but all come to repentance. Yes, He would, but they would not. Here is perhaps the highest example of man's volition being a necessary element in his salvation. Through Jesus' work on the cross, salvation became available for everyone. However, only those through the grace of God and their own volition can enter the kingdom of heaven salvation process. Another example can be found in Revelation during the Vial Judgments. This was the problem with those Pharisees and Scribes of which He spoke in Matthew 5:20. Once we realize that there is both a static

earthly kingdom of heaven, and a highly dynamic kingdom of heaven, we can see that the two kingdoms hypothesis is not weakened, but even strengthened by this verse.

For those who find it difficult to reconcile Matthew 5:20 with the above commentary, perhaps this might be a more satisfactory answer. The problem seems to be the absolute manner in which Jesus spoke to the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus told them that in no case could they enter the kingdom of heaven. Since He hadn't yet died there was no kingdom of heaven for those particular people to enter. On this basis one could conclude that they died before the kingdom of heaven came into being.

The next problem verse is in Matthew 8:11-12 *"11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: 12 but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* First, the context of these verses should be recognized. Just before Jesus spoke these words, He had complemented the Centurion for his great faith, a faith greater than He had found anywhere in Israel. This is immediately followed by the subject verses which appear to be directed to the Centurion. He speaks of the many who apparently gathered there in Capernaum. He is speaking specifically of the Jews who complacently "sit" (or lean back "Strong's 347) with their "fathers".

They rely on their ancestry for their salvation. They continue living in a "static" state while in the earthly kingdom of heaven. This means that they make no progress toward salvation. They will not participate in this dynamic portion of the kingdom of heaven where souls become saved. As long as this is their stance, they will never move into the operative dynamic kingdom of heaven. Verse 12 is speaking of the same people, who are there referred to as the "children" of the kingdom. It is because of their notion that they already have salvation, and have no need of any involvement with the operative kingdom of heaven, that there seems to be no hope for them and are therefore destined for the "outer darkness."

It seems that in these verses, Jesus is providing a graphic example to the Centurion of what happens to those who don't share the true faith, such as he had displayed. "Cast out" into "outer darkness" is a phrase that is worthy of further study. There is no mention of the "lake of fire" which in all the references it is the lake of fire that is the outer darkness where beings are cast. Because this is omitted, the outer darkness is a different place or condition. If they are being cast out, where is the place they are cast to? Scripture does not anywhere mention a third location where humanity will spend eternity. There is only the lake of fire and the new earth. Therefore this "outer darkness" must not be extraterrestrial nor permanent. It seems plausible that it is the mental / spiritual darkness whereby they are blind to what is going on around them in this dynamic kingdom of heaven. It is a blindness similar to what is running rampant in these end times. It is another way of expressing what Romans 1:24, 26 and 28 tells us as He reveals His foreknowledge of everyone's heart. Therefore, these people could come back out of that darkness if they would but seek the light and repent.

As noted, the advent of the two kingdoms come into being shortly after the resurrection of Jesus. Prior to that, at the end of the six days during which all things had been created, the universal kingdom of God came into existence. This kingdom of course included all of creation as well as that separate "place" outside of time and space where the Triune Godhead had existed in an eternal "now." God didn't simply set things in motion and then leave them alone. Scripture speaks many times of His (the Son's) intimate involvements with His creation and particularly with man.

Scripture reveals many of these instances when He walked with man, talked with man, appeared to man in physical form as a Theopany, as well as in visions and dreams. He also spoke in various ways to a select few whom we call the Prophets. To these He revealed many things that would happen in the future years, and thousands of years before they happened. It is through these prophecies and their fulfillments that we learn much about Him, and what He has told us would happen. This gift of knowledge that He gave is found in His Authorship of the Holy Bible. The God Authored information provided to the first century AD writers of the Gospels and the Epistles, which constitute

the New Testament, completed God's revelation to His people. It is primarily here that the fact, and purpose of what might be called "bifurcation" of the universal kingdom of God is revealed.

The evidence attesting to there being 2 kingdoms is all there in Scripture simply waiting to be discovered and put into appropriate words. No one seems to have chosen to examine the issue in any way that challenges the almost universal conclusion that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are simply two terms that can be used interchangeably, because they believe that there is but one kingdom. The only basis for this belief is the fact that a few of Jesus' parables, seem to equate the two kingdoms, giving us the impression that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are synonymous terms. It seems that for most commentators the case rests right there, with no reason to doubt the fact, or to look for any other evidences. A simple examining of the context and a word-for-word comparison of each rendition should alone be enough to reverse that doubt.

There are just 5 parables reported by Matthew where Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God. He does not compare them to the kingdom of heaven, because they simply do not apply to that kingdom. Therefore, while interesting, they are not directly relevant to the synonymity issue. For those who have found what is convincing, it is likely that this study, as it has for me, will open up a whole new vista of understanding of the incredible way Jesus has set up His procedures for dealing with redemption, the church, Israel, and all of creation, both present and future.

Finally, and in summary, the basis on which we can conclude that they are two discrete kingdoms is as follows:

As already described, we learn through Matthew, that both John the Baptist and Jesus speak of the kingdom of heaven as being "at hand." John preached this in the wilderness even before Jesus was indentified by John as the "Lamb of God." Then later, after His temptation by Satan, Jesus began preaching in Capernaum where we learned that He

preached saying “...*Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matthew 4:17). This was before He had chosen any of the Apostles. It was also about the same time that Jesus preached saying that “...*the kingdom of God is at hand.*” (Mark 1:15) While this by itself proves nothing conclusively, the fact is that Jesus most certainly spoke on at least one occasion, of the kingdom of heaven being at hand, and another time the kingdom of God, being at hand. This, and the other evidences noted above are powerfully convincing that these are different kingdoms. This, of course makes sense only if the context, and Scripture content lead to that conclusion. There are many evidences that confirm this belief.

Both statements by Jesus are carefully worded to indicate that neither kingdom was operative at that time. Each is merely “at hand” not “in hand.” or having already commenced. This terminology must be taken literally and understood as Jesus spoke it. There is no way to interpret the “at hand” other than to conclude that neither kingdom at that time was operative, or even yet existing, but soon each would be.

When we consider what we know to be true, that there was, since creation, a God-ordained kingdom, that can be accurately called the universal kingdom of God, we must at least begin to wonder as to what are these “at hand,” but-not-yet-here, kingdoms about which Jesus spoke. The much referred to 1 Corinthians 15 provides much of the answer. There we are told that God the Father gave all of creation to His son. When did this happen? Was it at some indeterminable time when in heaven, the Father and the Son swapped places regarding the control of the universal, kingdom of God? Obviously not, because we are told that this was an end time’s transaction which would therefore involve the Son of God / Son of Man, Christ Jesus.

In the absence of anything to the contrary, the newly established “at hand” kingdom of heaven became operative soon after Jesus was resurrected. It was the fact that the Jewish authorities denied His Messiahship that caused the Father to transfer all of creation to Jesus, thus creating the kingdom of heaven, thereby ending the universal kingdom of God. What remained was the spiritual-only kingdom of God. It is that

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“stripped down” kingdom that was also “at hand”. The primary function of the kingdom of heaven is to provide for the salvation of souls, and that of the kingdom of God is to provide a home for them. When all who will ever come to the faith and be saved has occurred, and all are safely in heaven, then, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 15:28, Jesus, the Son will turn everything, including Himself back to the Father. Then the earth will be destroyed, and a new earth will be created where the Godhead, Jesus, the angels and all saved souls will live literally forever.