

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

An article recently published in a contemporary magazine, is sent us by a reader of the TOWER for an answer and criticism. The article in question claims to find a great deal of "Dispensational difference" between the expressions "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God."

The writer endeavors, but signally fails, to prove that "kingdom of God" means a kingdom in men's hearts, and that the "kingdom of heaven" means the Millennial kingdom. While a great mistake made by Christians in general, undoubtedly is to ignore "dispensational statements" of truth, yet we believe it to be equally erroneous to go to an opposite extreme, and make differences where none really exist. It is difficult to estimate which of these extremes are the most injurious to truth. To sustain this theory, the writer is led to claim that Matthew's is "the Jew gospel," while the others, especially John's, are "the Christian's gospel."

What absurdity – were not those writers – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – merely historians? Do they not witness merely, or record the things which Jesus said and did? How, then, could one write a Jewish, and another a Christian gospel? The usual view is that each of these evangelists wrote independently of the others, except John, whose gospel is supposed to have been written partly to supply points remembered by him, which had been omitted by the other writers. Each writer evidently has used some license in the use of words, hence no two give their accounts in exactly the same words.

In the matter in question, Matthew uses the terms, "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" interchangeably, while the other writers use only the one, the last term. The word heavens signifies high, hence the kingdom of heaven is the high kingdom – higher than

earthly dominions, and of course that is the "kingdom of God." We give more space to the consideration of this subject than we really think it worthy of, because quite a good many called "Brethren" hold tenaciously to it, and because we would like to prove to all that a theory based on a twist or turn of a word, and not on a general principle of Bible teaching, is unworthy of our consideration.

That the two expressions are used interchangeably, will be seen by examining the following Scriptures:

In Luke 19:11,12; and 21:31. The kingdom of God is mentioned in such an unequivocal manner, that none can doubt that the Millennial Reign is referred to. This of itself would destroy the theory quoted; but we will give some unquestionable proof that the expressions are interchangeable ones. In the following Scriptures, Matthew uses the words "kingdom of heaven," while other evangelists use "kingdom of God."

Matt. 4:17: "Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Mark 1:14,15 reads, "Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." **[R397 : page 7]**

Matt. 13:11: "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."

Mark 4:11: "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God."

Matt. 19:23. "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." In verse 24, we have proof that Matthew uses the expressions interchangeably, for he there says "kingdom of God." The same language is quoted in both cases, kingdom of God, in Mark 10:24,25, and Luke 18:24 and 25.

Matt. 19:14: "Suffer...for of such is the kingdom of heaven."  
Mark 10:14, and Luke 18:16, read "kingdom of God."

Matt. 13:31: "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed." Mark 4:30,31: "Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God...it is like a grain of mustard seed." Luke 13:18: "Unto what is the kingdom of God like?...It is like a grain of mustard seed."

We shall offer no further evidence, though more could be presented; we believe the above sufficient to convince any unprejudiced mind, and it is useless to write for others.

The theory which the foregoing view is required to support may be shown: How else, they inquire, can the church now be the kingdom of God in its present time of suffering; and be the kingdom in a still different sense during the Millennial reign, unless the present condition be called the kingdom of God, and the future the kingdom of heaven? We answer, no such distinction is needed. The church is the kingdom now, only in the prospective sense that a babe is a man. The kingdom is now ours by faith, in the same way that we have every other heavenly blessing. When we are exalted and glorified with our Head and Bridegroom, Jesus – that will be our exaltation, or the kingdom of God, the heavenly kingdom, "set up." (Dan. 2:44.)

But they question – How is it that Luke says of the kingdom of God, it shall be within you, and cometh not with observation? We reply, you misread Luke 17:20. It speaks not of a kingdom present within those "Scribes and Pharisees – hypocrites," but of the manner in which the kingdom would come – It "cometh not with observation, neither shall ye say, lo, here! nor lo, there!" for it will be among men – a present, but invisible, power or government.

In due time it will bring mankind into harmony with itself. Then the kingdom of God will be "among men"; then men will be visible representatives of the invisible or spiritual kingdom. To this agree the words of John 3:3,5, and 1 Cor. 15:50. Thus considered, the record is harmonious, without straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel, as our brother whom we criticize has done.

-----