

IV. The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven.

- A. These two terms “have essentially the same meaning.” — BAGD
- B. Scofield makes several distinctions between the *Kingdom of God* and the *Kingdom of heaven*. p. 1003.

This section responds to Scofield’s note on Matthew 6.33

Mt 6.33 “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Scofield: The kingdom of God is to be distinguished from the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 3:2, *note*) in five respects:

(1) The kingdom of God is universal, including all moral intelligences willingly subject to the will of God, whether angels, the Church, or saints of past or future dispensations (Lk. 13:28, 29; Heb. 12:22, 23); while the kingdom of heaven is Messianic, mediatorial, and Davidic, and has for its object the establishment of the kingdom of God in the earth (Mt. 3:2, *note*; 1 Cor. 15:24, 25).

(2) The kingdom of God is entered only by the new birth (John 3:3, 5–7); the kingdom of heaven, during this age, is the sphere of a profession which may be real or false (Mt. 13:3, *note*; 25:1, 11, 12).

(3) Since the kingdom of heaven is the earthly sphere of the universal kingdom of God, the two have almost all things in common. For this reason many parables and other teachings are spoken of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew, and of the kingdom of God in Mark and Luke. It is the omissions which are significant. The parables of the wheat and tares, and of the net (Mt. 13:24–30, 36–43, 47–50) are not spoken of the kingdom of God. In that kingdom there are neither tares nor bad fish. But the parable of the leaven (Mt. 13:33) is spoken of the kingdom of God also, for, alas, even the true doctrines of the kingdom are leavened with the errors of which the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Herodians were the representatives. (See Mt. 13:33, *note*.)

(4) The kingdom of God “comes not with outward show” (Lk. 17:20), but is chiefly that which is inward and spiritual (Rom. 14:17); while the kingdom of heaven is organic, and is to be manifested in glory on the earth. (See “Kingdom (O.T.),” Zech. 12:8, *note*; (N.T.), Lk. 1:31–33; 1 Cor. 15:24, *note*; Mt. 17:2, *note*.)

(5) The kingdom of heaven merges into the kingdom of God when Christ, having “put all enemies under His feet,” “shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father” (1 Cor. 15:24–28). Cf. Mt. 3:2, *note*.¹

Note: I’ve made paragraphs at each numbered point for ease of reading. We will work through his points with explanation and some refutation.

1. Scofield says: The *Kingdom of God* is universal; *Kingdom of heaven* is Messianic, based on a contrast between Lk 13:28-29, Heb 12.22-23 and Mt 3.2, 1 Cor 15.24-25.

Lk 13.28-29 “In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out.²⁹ “And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline *at the table* in the kingdom of God.

Heb 12.22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect,

vs.

Mt 3.2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

1 Cor 15.24-25 then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

¹ C. I. Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Reference Bible: The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), 1003.

a. In contrast, consider the parallel passage Mt 8:11-12.

Mt 8.11-12 “I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven;¹² but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

b. The same language makes both universal.

2. Scofield says: “The kingdom of God is entered only by the new birth (John 3:3, 5–7); the kingdom of heaven, during this age, is the sphere of a profession which may be real or false (Mt. 13:3, *note*; 25:1, 11, 12).”

Jn 3.3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Jn 3.5-7 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.⁶ “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.⁷ “Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

vs.

Mt 13.3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow;

Four soils follow: some have an appearance of life, but time and trouble expose false professions

Mt 25.1 ¶ “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Mt 25.11-12 “Later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’¹² “But he answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’”

- a. Yet it is hard for a rich man to enter the *Kingdom of heaven*. Mt 19:23.

Mt 19:23 ¶ And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

- b. Truly, it is not hard for a rich man to enter the professing church.
- c. But it is hard for a rich man to humble himself and to be born again in the true church.
- d. Thus, *Kingdom of heaven* again describes a similar sphere as *Kingdom of God*.
3. Scofield says: These two terms “have almost all things in common.”

“Since the kingdom of heaven is the earthly sphere of the universal kingdom of God, the two have almost all things in common. For this reason many parables and other teachings are spoken of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew, and of the kingdom of God in Mark and Luke. **It is the omissions which are significant.** The parables of the wheat and tares, and of the net (Mt. 13:24–30, 36–43, 47–50) are not spoken of the kingdom of God. In that kingdom there are neither tares nor bad fish. But the parable of the leaven (Mt. 13:33) is spoken of the kingdom of God also, for, alas, even the true doctrines of the kingdom are leavened with the errors of which the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Herodians were the representatives.”²

- a. He says that the omissions are important: This is arguing from silence.
- b. The leaven also weakens his position, as he notes.

² Scofield, 1003 [emphasis mine].

1) Compare Mt 13.33 and Lk 13.20-21.

Mt 13.33 ¶ He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”

Lk 13.20-21 ¶ And again He said, “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹ “It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”

2) If the Kingdom of God is universal, only entered by the new birth, spiritual, not with outward show, etc., how can it contain the “errors of which the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Herodians were the representatives”?

C. This should not make us deny that there is an outward, visible manifestation of the Kingdom as well as an inward, universal quality to it.

1. However, this distinction doesn't depend on the two terms themselves.
2. The distinctions between visible and invisible manifestations must come only by a careful interpretation of the context.