

What is the “Kingdom of Heaven”? There’s a lot of controversy and a lot of misconceptions about this phrase. Is it Heaven? Is it some kind of earthly kingdom?

This phrase “Kingdom of Heaven” only appears in Matthew’s account of the gospel. In all of the other accounts, the phrase “Kingdom of God” is used. But these two phrases are the same thing. The “Kingdom of Heaven” or the “Kingdom of God” is simply the power or authority and protection of Jesus over His people. This kingdom comes from “of” heaven. Which means it is from God. It is the power and authority and dominion of God, where Jesus is the king with all sovereignty, and the Church is and are the citizens of the kingdom.

Why even mention the “Kingdom of Heaven”? Well, in **Matthew 13**, where we will be spending most of our time this evening, Jesus tells about seven stories, seven parables, that deal with the “Kingdom of Heaven”. Jesus really lays out who gets to enjoy the “Kingdom of Heaven”:

1. Those who Truly Receive the Word (**v. 23**)
 - a. Most of us know the parable of the sower; you’ve got all these different types of soil that represent the different hearts of men. All of the different soils received the seed, but only one type bears fruit – the good ground that hears and understands. These truly receive the word.
2. Those who Truly Grow in Faith (**v. 32-33**)
 - a. Here we have the parables of the mustard seed and of the leaven. In both of these cases you have something that is very small that grows into something big! Just like when we apply our faith we grow spiritually. As a result, the kingdom grows as we grow in faith.
3. Those who Truly Value the Kingdom (**v. 44, 46**)
 - a. Now these are the parables of the treasure and the pearl. These guys value these items so much that they are willing to sell everything else they have for this one thing. This is the exact attitude that we ought to have for the Kingdom of God. Nothing should hold us back, we need to be willing to drop everything else we have because the Kingdom has so much value to us.
4. Those who Truly Persevere to the End (**v. 48-50**)
 - a. The parable of the dragnet! They drop this net and get all kinds of fish. When they get to shore they keep all the good ones and the throw away all the bad ones. This is what’s going to happen! At the end of the age we will be separated: Good fish and Bad fish. If we have persevered to the end, we’ll be a good fish.

Did we go over all the parables in this chapter? Did we miss any? We skipped one that is right in the middle of this chapter! I did it on purpose. The parable of the Wheat and Tares in **verses 24-30** really intrigue me. Just to summarize what we just read, a man sows good seed in a field and an enemy comes and plants weeds in the night. Wheat and weeds look very similar in the early stages of growth so they had no idea. When the tares were noticed this man’s workers wanted to pull them out but the man says, “No don’t do that, you may hurt the wheat!” So they waited until the harvest and then they separate the wheat from the tares and burn the weeds and keep the wheat.

Okay but what does it mean? It’s okay if you don’t know because Jesus’ disciples didn’t know either so they asked Jesus. Let’s read Jesus’ explanation of this parable in **verses 36-43**. I love how Jesus explains this because it’s very plain and matter of fact, and most of it doesn’t have to be clarified. In other words, it’s making my job easier. Jesus tells us that:

- Christ has sown His disciples as wheat that grows on this earth
- The devil has sown his disciples as tares (or weeds) that also grow here
- For now, God allows them both to exist together.
- But one day, the angels will come and gather from this earth the tares from among (or around) the wheat (v41)
- The ungodly will be thrown into the fire, while the righteous will shine in the kingdom of the Father in heaven forever.

With that explanation shared, let’s also note some important things we can learn about God:

1. God Did Not Create Evil
 - a. The devil did. Look at **verses 37-39**. Jesus sowed good seed; Jesus made good. This is in total contrast to the devil who sowed evil. If someone makes the claim that God set evil or evil people in the world, then they are sadly mistaken!
 - b. **Habakkuk 1:13** – God is too pure to approve of evil and he can't look on wickedness with any favor. So how and why in the world would God, who is the total and complete image of purity and perfection create evil? The answer is simply – he didn't. Just as darkness is the absence of light, the absence of God is evil. For God to have created evil, he would have had to take himself completely out of the picture.
2. God Allows Evil to Exist
 - a. This is completely different from the last point. Why would God allow evil to exist? Look at **verse 29**. The answer is Love. Jesus loves the wheat; Jesus loves his children so much that he doesn't want the weeds, the evil people, to be pulled – for the chance that his children get hurt. But not only that. I mentioned earlier how wheat and weeds look very similar. Jesus gives those weeds a chance to be wheat. They look so similar that you may pull wheat and leave the tares. Jesus loves the tares as well – he gives them time to become wheat.
 - b. **2 Peter 3:9** – God does not want people to die in their sins! He wants everyone to repent and be faithful because he loves everyone! He is patient and gives all of us every chance to repent. By allowing evil to exist and allowing the wheat and the weeds to grow together, there's a risk of wheat turning into weeds. But there is also hope! Hope that a weed will turn into wheat! That's why God allows us to live together!
3. God Will Separate Evil
 - a. We cannot change the fact, the fact, that there will be judgment. Look at **verses 41-43**. At judgement, Jesus is going to send angels in the midst of his people and in the presence of everyone and separate the good from the evil. **Verse 41** can be hard to read. The way Robertson Word Pictures lays it out is they will gather out of *the midst of* the kingdom. It's not the Church because the Church is the group of people who is saved but rather it is from among them or from around them. It's not a pretty sight at all for those who offend and practice lawlessness - **verse 42**. But for the righteous, what does Matthew say will happen? **Verse 43** – shall shine as the sun in heaven! So get in the Church! Get under the protection of his Kingdom!
 - b. **Matthew 25:31-34, 41** – There will be this separation. The righteous will inherit glory that had been prepared before the foundation of the world! But the ungodly will be separated and **verse 46**, be in eternal punishment.

Alright we understand God's goodness and how he didn't create evil but out of love allows it to stay in the world. We understand that at the end of this age we're going to be judged, but what are some things we can do right now?

1. Understand Sin's Source
 - a. We talked about earlier that God did not create and does not cause us to sin. We talked about how the devil created sin but that's only half of it. Turn over to **James 1:13-15**. It's our own desires and our own inklings that draw us away from God and it is the evil one who tries to trigger this with temptations! If we can understand that fully, then we can:
 - a. Stop blaming God
 - b. Know it's not just us
 - c. Know the devil
2. Accept The Challenges
 - a. We talked about how God allows evil to exist. And because of this evil there are challenges that we all face. We can stop wishing for it all to go away and we can accept the challenges! If you're still in **James**, look at **verse 12**. He who endures or he who perseveres! The only way to get through a challenge is to accept it and go for it with all we've got like Paul in **1 Corinthians 9**, he gave it everything he had and in both these passages the reward is the crown of life. If we understand this, we can:
 - a. Pass this test of living among sin
 - b. Put in more effort to convert souls
3. Choose What You Will Be
 - a. We spent a lot of time discussing the wheat and the tares. We know Jesus loves both of them, we know that God allows the tares to be with the wheat in hopes that they will turn to him and prove themselves to be

wheat, but we also know there will be a separation. A separation that is eternal. The Righteous, the wheat, will obtain eternal life. The Wicked, the tares, will receive eternal punishment.

Right now you have a choice to make.

You can show Jesus that you want to be wheat! Submitting to him, confessing him, and putting on him through baptism! Jesus loves you and wants you to turn to him! Or you can choose to be a weed. If you are a tare tonight, you know it. So does God.

We talked about who would get to enjoy the Kingdom at the beginning of this lesson. With this parable added in there is another category. Those who truly prepare for the harvest will enjoy the Kingdom. Make the choice right now to be

Wheat for Jesus.