

The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven: Is There a Difference? by Ward Fenley

The Harmony of the Kingdoms

There are several passages which show that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are synonymous. Some futurists believe there are as many as three kingdoms of God and possibly even more. However, in examining the Scriptures we will see there is one kingdom which is identified in several ways: two of which are the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven.

First let us present the harmony of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. The first words out of John the Baptist's mouth were:

Matthew 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

So we immediately see that the kingdom of heaven was said to be at hand. Jesus basically reiterated this identical statement when His ministry began:

Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Here is the harmony of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven in the gospels:

Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Mark 1:14-15 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, {15} And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

We certainly cannot view Mark as having written an entire separate account. If this hermeneutic were implemented, we would then have to completely change our designation of the Gospels as synoptic. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are the same. If they are different then we would have to decide which one was nearer--the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. Then, once we figured out which one was nearer, we would have to identify when the first came and when the second came. Let us suppose, as many futurists do, that the kingdom of God took place at Pentecost. Was this imminent? If so, how were the apostles to know this? Did they know this because Jesus said in Mark that the kingdom of God was at hand? If the futurist acknowledges this statement of imminence, then how would they interpret the statement of imminence in Matthew's account where Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is at hand? Should we suddenly revert back to a mystically de-chronological hermeneutic? If not, then the only alternatives would be to say that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God were equally imminent and both took place at Pentecost; or that one of the kingdoms took place at

Pentecost and the other at the Parousia in AD 70 when Jesus Christ destroyed the Temple. The last alternative would be to maintain that the two terms are synonymous and that the statement of imminence was referring to the complete establishment of the New Covenant or the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom harmony continues:

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 6:20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

The result of being poor in spirit is inheriting the kingdom of God or heaven.

This same kingdom of heaven that was said to be at hand is the resting place of all those who are the seed of Abraham (believers in Jesus Christ):

Matthew 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 13:28-29 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. {29} And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

The message Jesus preached at the beginning of His ministry was the same message with which He commissioned the disciples, i.e., the kingdom of God or heaven is near. Matthew and Luke have different accounts of this commission. Luke shows Christ associating healing with the kingdom of God. Matthew associates imminence with the kingdom of heaven. Both are addressing the same kingdom.

Matthew 10:7 As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'

Luke 9:2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.

John the Baptist, though the greatest of the prophets, was said to have an inferior position compared to the status of those in the kingdom of heaven. Luke describes this as the kingdom of God, whereas Matthew describes it as the kingdom of heaven:

Matthew 11:11-12 I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. {12} From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

Luke 7:28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is

greater than he.

Just what mysteries were to be revealed? Did Jesus reveal two separate sets of mysteries? Or were the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God one and the same?

Matthew 13:11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

Mark 4:11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

Luke 8:10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

In these next passages we see that the inhabitants of the kingdom of God must become as little children:

Matthew 18:3-4 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. {4} Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.")

Mark 10:14-15 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. {15} Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

Luke 18:16-17 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. {17} Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

Once again, the "two" kingdoms are synonymous.

Luke and Mark speak of the difficulty a rich man has in entering the kingdom of God. Matthew speaks of the rich man's difficulty entering the kingdom of heaven. But what is particularly interesting is the fact that Jesus uses both phrases in the account in Matthew:

Matthew 19:23-24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. {24} And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Mark 10:23-25 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! {24} And the

disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! {25} It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Luke 18:24-25 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! {25} For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Matthew and Mark compare the mustard seed to the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God respectively:

Matthew 13:31 He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.

Mark 4:30-31 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? {31} It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

In these next passages we find something interesting:

Matthew 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

Luke 16:16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

If the kingdom of God was to take place at Pentecost as an entirely separate kingdom from the kingdom of heaven, and this kingdom was a spiritual, inward kingdom; then we may understand Jesus speaking of the violent trying to take it by force. However, if the kingdom of heaven is a far removed kingdom of physical pleasure, and the physical earth has been destroyed, how are the violent taking it by force and pressing into it? This of course is presuming that violent has a negative connotation. If, on the other hand, "violence" speaks of a holy zeal in Jesus Christ (as puritan Thomas Watson says), the futurist still has a problem in that they cannot explain from where these people are coming who are pressing into the kingdom. After all, if all the believers are in heaven, and all unbelievers are in the lake of fire after the cosmic dissolution of the universe, then there simply could not be any more people trying to enter. All the beneficiaries of the promise would have it and all would be well. However, biblically, we see that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are the same, regardless of the interpretation defended concerning the violent pressing into the kingdom.

From these passages, it is explicitly clear that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are identical. They are not two separate kingdoms nor are they even two different phases of one kingdom. They are one and the same, just sometimes identified differently. An example of this would be the identification of Jesus Christ as God and yet as the Son of God. We do not negate His deity simply because of the difference in name.

The Kingdom of the Son is the Kingdom of God

From here we turn to another analysis: the kingdom of the Son and its synonymity with the kingdom of God. This is especially clear in this monumental statement of Christ concerning the timing of His return in His kingdom:

Matthew 16:27-28 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. {28} Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Mark 9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

Luke 9:27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

Both Luke and Mark record that some of the disciples would not die until they saw the kingdom of God. Matthew's account, however, says the disciples would not die until they saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom. Not only is this an extremely strong case for the deity of Jesus Christ; it also powerfully supports the fact that the kingdom of the Son and the kingdom of God are the same kingdom. This kingdom would come before some of the disciples would die.

A less direct example of the kingdom of the Son being synonymous with the kingdom of God is seen in comparing the accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke concerning Christ's disciples giving up all for the sake of the kingdom of God:

Matthew 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Mark 10:29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

Luke 18:29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,

The account in Matthew speaks of Christ's disciples giving up all for His name's sake. The account in Mark says the same and interestingly adds, "and the gospel's." However, the account in Luke is very clear when it says, "the kingdom of God's sake." The implication is that the kingdom of God is identical with Christ and His kingdom and His Gospel, thus being a strong testimony that to have Christ in us is to have the kingdom in us (Luke 17:20,21).

Concerning the precursory events to take place before the Parousia, Jesus informs the disciples that when they saw these events come to pass, they could know with certainty the kingdom of Christ was at the doors:

Matthew 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

Mark 13:29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

Luke 21:31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

The whole context of Matthew 24 is the coming of Jesus Christ. We see this in the first three verses in Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:1-3 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. {2} And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. {3} And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

The disciples were inquiring of the coming of Jesus Christ. They asked what would be the sign of "Thy" coming. Jesus spoke clearly that He was addressing His coming:

Matthew 24:30-31 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. {31} And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Not only is the coming mentioned, Christ also brings the holy angels into the picture; which harmonizes with the passage in Matthew 16:27-29, where Christ teaches He would come in His kingdom with His holy angels before some of the disciples would taste death. Therefore, when Matthew records Jesus as saying, "when ye shall see all these things, know that it (His coming) is near, even at the doors," he is saying exactly what Mark and Luke are saying in their accounts of the same discourse:

Mark 13:29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

Luke 21:31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

Here it is very evident that the kingdom of God is equivalent with the kingdom of the Son.

The Kingdom of the Father is the Kingdom of God

Just as the kingdom of the Son is the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Father is the kingdom of God:

Matthew 26:28-29 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. {29} But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Mark 14:25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Luke 22:16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

Luke 22:18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

Luke 22:30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Kingdom of the Son is the Kingdom of the Father

In the accounts mentioned in Matthew we saw that Christ would come in His kingdom with His holy angels. This same angelic accompanying is addressed in Matthew 13:

Matthew 13:41-44 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; {42} And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. {43} Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. {44} Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Notice verse 44 continues the parables of Christ in his demonstrating what the kingdom of heaven is like. Jesus is merely continuing the context of the details concerning His coming. But what is fascinating is that neither Matthew nor Jesus makes any distinction between the kingdom of the Son and the kingdom of the Father. Verse 41 speaks of the kingdom of the Son of man. Verse 43 speaks of the kingdom of the Father. They are identical kingdoms.

In the well-known Lord's Prayer, it is the coming of the *Father's* kingdom for which the apostles were to pray:

Matthew 6:9-10 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. {10} Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

As we have seen, this kingdom is the kingdom of the Son. Even the Son declared His unity with the Father:

John 10:30 I and my Father are one.

John 17:22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

We first established the kingdom of God is identical with the kingdom of heaven. Second, we established the kingdom of God is synonymous with the kingdom of the Son. Therefore we must conclude the kingdom of the Son is synonymous with the kingdom of heaven, which is synonymous with the kingdom of God. Third, we established the kingdom of the Son is the kingdom of the Father. They all are referring to the same kingdom. It must follow then, that any passages that speak of the kingdom of the Son must be the same as the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Father and the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, as we examine the New Testament passages which testify that true believers are in one of these kingdoms, we can conclude that whichever kingdom is mentioned, it is synonymous with one eternal and heavenly kingdom.

Besides the fact that the word kingdom is used well over a hundred times in the Gospels alone, here are some passages which reveal the immense significance of the message of this kingdom:

Matthew 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matthew 9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Acts 1:3 To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Acts 19:8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Acts 20:25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

Acts 28:23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

Acts 28:31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern

the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Since we have already decisively concluded there are not many different kingdoms, but rather different names for one eternal kingdom; it is imperative we acknowledge the Scriptures which teach the presence of true believers in this eternal kingdom.

First, in Romans Paul teaches that some of the characteristics of the kingdom are exactly contrary to the fleshly ordinances of national Israel:

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

From the passages we have already studied, we should have implied the kingdom of which Jesus and the apostles spoke was none other than the eternal kingdom predicted in the law and the prophets. Paul brings to the attention of the Romans the fact that three characteristics in particular are present in the kingdom of God. Each of these characteristics was prophesied in the law and the prophets concerning the eternal kingdom which was to come:

Righteousness:

Psalm 17:15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

Psalm 23:3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Psalm 24:5-6 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. {6} This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

This last reference should be interesting to us in that Jesus Christ said "blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Christ also said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." Faith in Jesus Christ is seeking Christ, which is seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Upon faith in Jesus Christ, the believer in Jesus Christ receives the everlasting righteousness which comes from His sacrifice on the cross. This is why the Psalmist said this righteousness comes from God. Isaiah conveys this same truth:

Isaiah 54:17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

Here are several passages that speak of righteousness being made known or revealed from heaven:

Psalm 50:6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.

Psalm 85:9-13 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. {10} Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. {11} Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. {12} Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our

land shall yield her increase. {13} Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.

Psalm 98:2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen.

Micah 7:9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.

Romans tells us this revealed righteousness is the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. {17} For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Here are a few other passages which speak of righteousness applied to the people of God, or God as their righteousness:

Isaiah 1:27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

Isaiah 26:9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

Isaiah 45:24 Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

Isaiah 46:13 I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

Isaiah 51:5-8 My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. {6} Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. {7} Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. {8} For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

Jeremiah 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Paul said the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy. Here are several prophetic passages that speak of a time when these elements in general would be fulfilled:

Psalm 89:15-16 Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. {16} In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.

Psalm 132:9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.

Isaiah 32:16-17 Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. {17} And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

Paul understood that in Jesus Christ, righteousness, peace, and joy are fulfilled:

2 Corinthians 1:20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Ephesians 2:13-17 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. {14} For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; {15} Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; {16} And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: {17} And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

John 16:24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

1 John 1:4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Romans 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

As we have noted previously, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the Son are one and the same. Paul explicitly proclaims believers have been translated into the kingdom of the Son:

Colossians 1:12-14 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: {13} Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: {14} In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

The real difficulty comes with trying to reconcile what futurists describe as the "already but not yet" with the Scripture. There are two primary reasons they have done this: First, they approach the study of the kingdom with the presupposition that there is at least a spiritual kingdom and a physical kingdom. All of the millennial schemes do this, whether pre, post, or amillennial. Second, they do not see the clear Scriptural teaching concerning what we must identify as the *transformation* period. It is a recognition of this transformation period that will solve the "already but not yet" problem. First, it is necessary to see several passages that speak of the New

Covenant being brought to consummation through process:

Hebrews 8:13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

Here the Old Covenant (O.C.) is said to have been in the process of waxing old and decaying. It tells us that it was ready to vanish away.

2 Corinthians 3:11 For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

The phrase, "done away" is translated "is passing away" in the New King James Version clearly implying that the fading glory of the O.C. was approaching its end as the New Covenant (N.C.) was progressing.

Hebrews 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

Once again, the present tense is extremely important to our understanding of the gradual progression of the N.C. and the gradual digression of the O.C. From here we turn to chapter 12 of Hebrews to observe the use of the present tense to describe the unfolding of the New Covenant kingdom:

Hebrews 12:18-28 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, {19} And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: {20} (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: {21} And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) {22} But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, {23} To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, {24} And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. {25} See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: {26} Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. {27} And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. {28} Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

The context is definitively speaking of the contrast between the two covenants. Verses 18-21 deal with the mountain and kingdom of the O.C., a covenant which only produced the wrath of God. Verses 22-28 deal with the mountain and kingdom of the N.C., a covenant that produced righteousness and forgiveness. The O.C. is metaphorically described here as the heavens and earth. These were in the process of "being shaken" (vs.27). The verb is in the present tense, showing the gradual

removal of the curse upon the people of God. However, this gradual removal was not without a replacement far better:

Hebrews 7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Hebrews 7:22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

Hebrews 8:6-7 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. {7} For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

The better replacement is very evident in Hebrews 12:

Hebrews 12:27-28 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. {28} Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Notice the phrase, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom." The verb receiving is likewise in the present tense, and shows how the N.C. kingdom was being brought to its fullness by progression. This progression or transformation involved the reforming work of the Holy Spirit to bring the church into the image of Christ-an image into which Paul says they were already being changed:

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The kingdom of which Paul speaks in Hebrews 12:28 is none other than the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven we have already studied.

What we must conclude, therefore, is the fact that three different analyses of the kingdom must be taken into consideration: First, the first-century saints were said to already be in the kingdom:

Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Revelation 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

And yet in other passages the kingdom seems to be a future event for the first-

century church:

Hebrews 13:13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

James 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

2 Peter 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

However, there is no contradiction or "already but not yet" when the passages dealing with the transformation are observed:

Hebrews 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

1 Corinthians 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

2 Corinthians 3:9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

This last verse uses the present tense for the verb *exceed*. The passage actually reads, "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more is the ministration of righteousness exceeding in glory." This is because the New Covenant was growing into fullness as it was exceeding the glory of the Old Covenant.

The ministration of righteousness, the N.C. kingdom, was exceeding in glory while the ministration of death, the O.C. kingdom, was diminishing in glory. In fact, though the literal veil was torn in two at the crucifixion of Christ, the actual veil of spiritual death was still upon the elect unsaved Jews, but was in the process of being done away as the remnant according to the election of grace were believing in Christ. Not only this, but for those who were believers, the veil was in the process of being removed as they had not yet entered into the holiest of holies.

2 Corinthians 3:14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is being done away in Christ.

It is also important to realize that the first-century Christians honestly believed they were serving a King:

Acts 17:7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus Christ the King was ruling over the kingdom which was being transformed into

the fullness of the New Covenant. This one kingdom was in the process of being received by the first-century believers.

From what we have studied, it is evident that the kingdom which was said to be at hand began to unfold at Pentecost and was brought to its fullness at the Parousia. This occurred at the destruction of the Jewish Temple. This was the outward sign that the inward kingdom was in its full form and Christ the King was, at last, in His people who had previously had the Spirit as the guarantee of their inheritance. This inheritance was that prepared for those who would be made kings and priests:

Revelation 5:9-10 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; {10} And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Peter called them a royal priesthood:

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

This light of the kingdom was prophesied in the O.T.:

Isaiah 60:19-21 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. {20} Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. {21} Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

The Psalmist predicted the presence of the Bride with Christ her King:

Psalm 45:10-15 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; {11} So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. {12} And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour. {13} The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. {14} She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. {15} With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.

The Psalmist relates the city of the great King to Mount Zion:

Psalm 48:1-2 A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. {2} Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

As does the writer of Hebrews:

Hebrews 12:22-23 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, {23} To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

The Psalmist predicts the relationship of the creation of the spiritual Israel of God as the children of Zion with their King:

Psalm 149:2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

This creation is none other than that which is created in Christ Jesus:

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Notice the passage in Psalms speaks of Israel rejoicing in the King Who made him. Paul says if any man be *in* Christ, he is a new *creature*.

Isaiah predicted the eternity of the government of this King of Israel:

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. {7} Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

There was one kingdom predicted in the prophets. There was one kingdom of which our Lord spoke. And there was one kingdom which began at Pentecost and was brought to its fullness at the Parousia. This is the heavenly kingdom of God, the Kingdom of the dear Son, the kingdom of the Father-a kingdom in which all the elect of God are ruling with their King and rejoicing in the God of their salvation.