

The Kingdom Offered

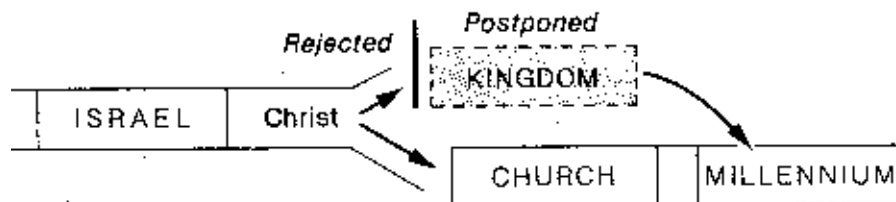
In subject matter the division between the Old Testament and the New occurs at the Cross of CHRIST, rather than between Malachi and Matthew. The Gospels, in the main, carry forward the same dispensational conditions that were in effect at the hour when CHRIST was born.



Especially is this true of the Gospel of Matthew, CHRIST being set forth in that Gospel, first of all, as a King with His Kingdom in full view. The Spirit faithfully selected those deeds and teachings of CHRIST from the vast manifestations in the flesh which portrayed Him as the dominant character reflected in each Gospel.

- in Matthew He is presented as the King;
- in Mark as the Lord's servant;
- in Luke as the perfect human; and
- in John as the very Son of GOD.

In all the gospel narratives, the Lord Jesus is seen acting and teaching under the same conditions which existed for centuries before the Cross. There are purposefully veiled references as to what would follow the Cross but greater still are the references as to what had gone on before the cross.



Whatever preceded the Cross, in the main, fell under those conditions and colorings of "the law which came by Moses," and JESUS not only held up Moses as the controlling authority during the Kingdom Age, though He most certainly expanded the teachings of the law given to Moses.

A great division between the Old Testament and the New, therefore, lies in the fact that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and that "grace and truth" being connected and expanded with the Cross of CHRIST rather than with His birth. Matthew opens with an emphasis upon CHRIST as the Son of David.

Although, in Matthew's Gospel, JESUS is presented as the "son of Abraham" in sacrificial death, the primary purpose of the writer is to describe the nation's King. The office of Israel's King is the only office assigned to the "Son of David."

The tracing of the divinely appointed Kingdom thus proceeds from the Old Testament into the New without a change other than the appearance of the long expected King, accompanied by His forerunner, whose predicted ministry had occupied the closing words of the Old Testament revelation. There is no break in the narrative.

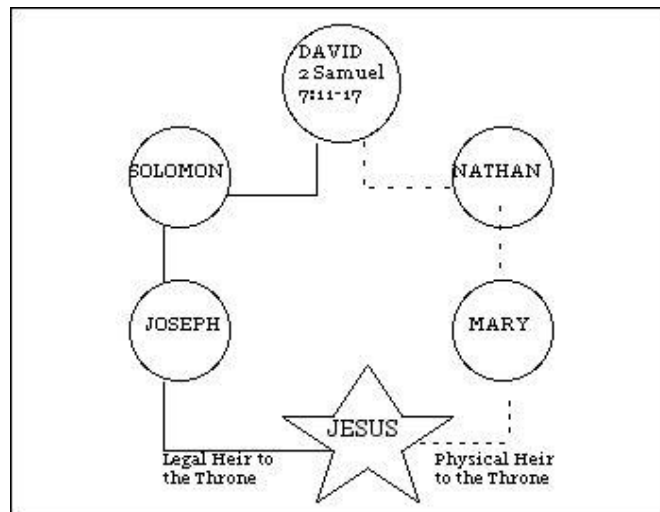
The fact that JESUS was David's Greater Son, the fulfiller of all the nation's Kingdom blessings is not based on human opinion. It was announced by the angel Gabriel before the birth of CHRIST as recorded in Luk 1:31-32.

Luk 1:31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord

Luk 1:32 God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Jesus was the rightful heir both through Mary and his step-father Joseph, just as was recorded in the Old Testament, the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke.

Isa 9:6-7; Mat 1:16 and Luk 3:31



No Gentile blessings are in view here; nor is there need for the Gentiles to intrude. Gentile blessings will eventually flow out of this very throne; but these are not in view, nor are any Gentile blessings endangered by a faithful recognition of this distinctly Jewish purpose—to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.

Rom 15:8 Now this I say that Jesus Christ was a minister to Israel for the truth of God, to **confirm the promises made unto the fathers.**

He did not come to annul those promises; but He did come to confirm them. The promises made unto the fathers are well defined: however, no promises by the Godman were made to Gentiles. The term "the fathers" can mean none other than GOD's chosen men of Israel.

By these promises Israel was to be redeemed and placed in her own land and that by Immanuel (God with us) who should be the final Prophet, Priest and King. He was to be her King over her covenanted Kingdom.

It is recorded of JESUS:

- He was "born King of the Jews."

Mat 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

- To this throne He made final claim at His trial

Mat 27:11 Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.

- And under this accusation He suffered

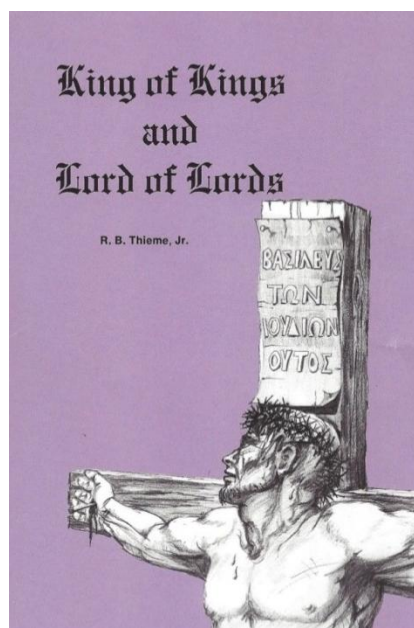
Mat 27:29 and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said.

Mat 27:30 They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.

Mat 27:31 After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

- And under this accusation He died

Mat 27:37 Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.



One needs only to search the Scriptures to discover the fact that He is never mentioned as King of the church, nor King of the nations until He comes again as "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Rev 19:16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

He fulfilled every prediction that described Israel's Messiah King and the manner of His coming, at a time when all the records and genealogies were intact. He came of the tribe of Judah, a Son of David, born of a virgin in Bethlehem of Judea. Such claims could not then be made by an impostor without arousing the violent opposition of any knowledgeable Jewish believer. He met every prediction concerning Israel's Immanuel King. He was that King.

Four centuries before the birth of JESUS Malachi had prophesied the coming of a reincarnated Elijah, the forerunner to the King. This had a certain fulfillment in John the Baptist according to angelic testimony from the very lips of JESUS Himself:

Luk 1:13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John...

Luk 1:16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Mat 17:10 The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

Mat 17:11 Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things.

Mat 17:12 **But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him**, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."

Mat 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Thus another Messianic claim was met in the faithful ministry of John the Baptist. The first message of this divinely foreseen witness is recorded by Matthew.

Mat 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,

Mat 3:2 Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

This, too, was the first message recorded of CHRIST:

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

You cannot reduce JESUS to the dimensions of a simple unsophisticated Galilean teacher. He makes the most astounding claims. He walks through the pages of the Gospels—great, majestic, exalted—as One Who knew Himself to be the Son of God and the promised Messiah. You cannot eliminate these claims, for He and His claims are one. He on more than one occasion claimed He was the Son of God and the Jewish Messah.

Joh 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

Joh 5:18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Joh 9:35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

Joh 9:36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

Joh 9:37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

Joh 9:38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Joh 10:33 "We are not stoning you for any of these things," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God ..."

Joh 10:36 what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son?'"

Joh 5:22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,

Joh 5:23 that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him ...

Joh 5:25 I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

Joh 4:25 The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Joh 4:26 Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Luk 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, Jesus expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luk 24:44 And Jesus said unto them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me."

Joh 5:39 "Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me ...

Joh 5:46 For had you had believed Moses, you would have believed me; for Moses wrote of me."

Joh 5:47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?"

The message of JESUS was as simple as the reputation of His home Province—Galilee: It was THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND-- the only message committed to His disciples when He first sent them forth to preach:

Mat 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

Mat 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Mat 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This message, it will be seen, had no application to Gentiles: The messengers were to go "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It can scarcely go unnoticed that while every detail of the manner of their journey was subject to the most careful instruction by the King, there is no record of instruction having been given them as to the meaning of the Kingdom message committed to them.

Evidently they did not need such instruction concerning the Kingdom:

- had not the Kingdom hope been passed from father to son for generations?
- had it not been sung to them at their mother's knee?
- had it not been the one great theme of the synagogue instruction?
- was it not their national hope?

How much in contrast to this was the prolonged inability on the part of these same disciples to grasp, the new message.

Acts 1:6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Acts 1:7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

This focusing of the testimony of JESUS, of John the Baptist and of the disciples upon one solitary message proved difficult to "shake." What was the message: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" but understanding its true meaning is just as difficult today as it was in that first century. It was addressed to one nation, Israel, and to them as a whole, rather than to individuals.

Thus the "kingdom of heaven" as a message must ever be distinguished from the message of the gospel of grace which came by the Cross. The gospel of grace Israel, as a nation, has never understood. Just as clearly, however, many individual Jews have understood the message and have become "one in Christ."

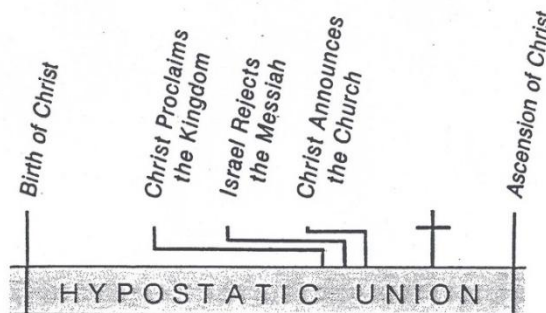
Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The people of our Lords day expected their Messiah to come in shining armor to muster an invincible army to defeat the hated Romans. Their problem was the cross with its associated humiliation.

GENTILES				ISRAEL	KINGDOM
Positive Volition	Negative Volition	Noah's Family	Jewish Patriarchs	Jewish Client Nation	+
Creation of man	Fall of Adam	Flood	Abraham	Moses and the Exodus	
					Birth of Christ

Many of our Muslim friends today will say "Oh I can believe JESUS was God's Son but not the cross and death of that Son." Several years earlier I was amazed at an Egyptian student who voiced just such an objection: "God would never let His Son suffer and die. I therefore cannot become a Christian for that reason."

The message of the "kingdom of heaven" as first set forth by Matthew had, therefore, a limited and national meaning. It was addressed to Israel alone and to those only who lived in the Age of the Hypostatic Union. Kingdom passages often create problems in the minds of believers and unbelievers. One acquaintance to whom I witnessed said, "I could never believe the Bible because Christ said he would bring peace on earth and here we are in the middle of a war-torn world. There is no peace on earth."



The message of the "kingdom of heaven" did not concern itself so much with the Person of the King as it did with His Kingdom. But Israel had never dreamed of a Kingdom apart from the presence and power of the expected King. Thus JESUS could say of Himself, in the light of the accepted close relationship between the Person of the King and His Kingdom: "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst--in the person of the King."

Luk 17:20 Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, Luk 17:21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst--in the person of the King.

The Kingdom as foreseen in the Old Testament and as described by our Lord, had as a condition precedent a righteousness which would have its source in acceptance of the Messiah and His platform. Rather than accept JESUS' platform Israel wanted it their way.

They loved the terrible yoke of the Mosaic Law and their façade of righteous living. Christ provided an interesting response concerning "what they were to do."

"What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" and to this He replied: "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (Joh 6:28, 29)

It should be borne in mind that the Kingdom requirements as stated in the Sermon on the Mount are meant to prepare the way for the earthly Davidic Kingdom when it shall be established on the earth, when the four unconditional covenants will be implemented.

It may be concluded that the term "kingdom of heaven" as used in the early ministry of JESUS referred to the Messianic, Davidic, earthly Kingdom seen in the Old Testament. As has been noted, the Jewish preachers needed no instruction in the details of that message. It was the hope of their nation, and it was addressed to that nation alone. Israel's Kingdom was faithfully offered to them by their King at His First Advent and repeatedly rejected by our LORD'S generation.

This Kingdom message conforms in another respect, to the requisites of the Old Testament Kingdom. There must be a great national heart-turning, or repentance.

Deu 30:1 When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you ...
Deu 30:2 and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today,
Deu 30:3 then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.

Repentance, therefore, became an imperative part of the message concerning the Kingdom. As certainly as the message of the "kingdom of heaven" was a claim upon the nation's hope, so, also, the rule of life presented in connection with this claim by both John the Baptist and CHRIST was in harmony with the Old Testament Kingdom rule of life. The Kingdom as foreseen in the Old Testament had ever in view the righteousness in life and conduct of its subjects; had Israel accepted CHRIST'S kingdom message the New Covenant would have taken care of all the difficulties associated with the impossible standards demanded by CHRIST'S platform.

First let's look at a small sample of impossible standards and then we will review the method of fulfillment.

The IMPOSSIBLE STANDARD – The Olivet Discourse

Mat 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Mat 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Mat 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Mat 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men...

Mat 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'

Mat 5:22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment ... in danger of the fire of hell...

Mat 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'

Mat 5:28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart ...

Mat 5:31 "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'

Mat 5:32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

Mat 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Mat 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

Mat 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Mar 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

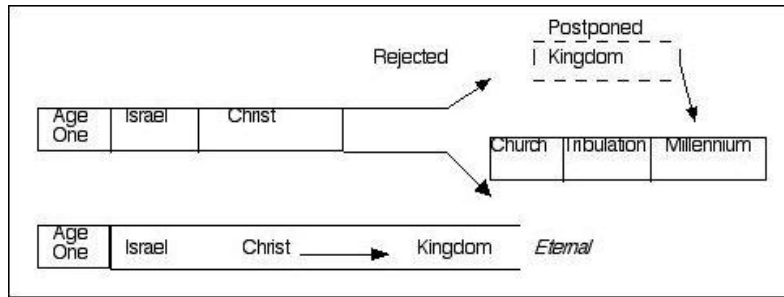
The METHOD OF FULFILLMENT--The New Covenant

Jer 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

Jer 31:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

Jer 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The Kingdom Teachings will one day be implemented at the return of Christ, at His Second Advent. A chart will perhaps facilitate our understanding.



As has been stated, whatever was meant by this announcement of the "kingdom of heaven," it was clearly understood by those who proclaimed it. No other Kingdom message could have thus been received by those people in that day. So, also, it was addressed to one nation, Israel, and to them as a whole, rather than to individuals.

Thus the "kingdom of heaven" as a message must ever be distinguished from the message of the gospel of grace which came by the cross.

Let me close with a quote from Lewis Sperry Chafer regarding the Kingdom Age.

“When reading a Gospel (particularly a synoptic gospel) the Church Age believer must keep in mind to whom these books have primary application-Israel. According to the Scriptures, all time is divided into ... dispensations. Due recognition of the essential character of each of these dispensations is the key to the understanding of the Bible ... The fact of confusing ... the characteristics ... in each is common, and is, doubtless, the greatest error into which many devout Bible interpreters fall.”

Let us pray.

Now it is time to prepare for our Lord’s Table. Put your study materials up, get your hymnals out and turn to page # 99. Ken come and lead us as we sing the first and last verses of *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. Please stand as we sing.