
REVELATION STUDY

SESSION 8

Kingdom of Heaven vs Kingdom of God

Many years ago I bought a cheap telescope – then had the chance to look with a friend’s expensive one. The difference was amazing, and my cheap one has not been used since. One discovery you can make is you can be looking with a telescope, and then get a look through another with higher quality optics, you might discover that what appears to be one star, happens to be two, or even a cluster of stars very close together.

It is a good illustration for us to consider when reading Scripture. Have you ever seen, or read a book or chart attempting to harmonize the Gospels, to try and bring one full account from the four Gospels, and some of the other passages of Scripture also. This can be a good exercise – but it can also be misleading, because when it comes to the Bible, those subtle differences are important.

One example is with what we know as the Olivet Discourse, when Jesus gives a description of events that were to take place in the future. People often try and ‘harmonize’ them as ‘one discourse’ but they are different, and they give two different messages to two different audiences. In particular the Luke 21 passage is different to those in Matthew 24 and Mark 13.

Another example is the use of the phrase ‘Kingdom of Heaven as opposed to Kingdom of God. Most commentators presume they are the same, but I would like you to consider that they are not.

Matthew uses Kingdom of Heaven 33 times and it is the only Gospel in which Jesus is recorded as using this phrase. Mark, Luke and John only use Kingdom of God. But what is interesting is that along with the 33 occurrences of Kingdom of Heaven, Matthew also uses the phrase Kingdom of God 5 times, even in the same paragraph. I’d suggest that means that there is a subtle difference to be found.

 Matthew 19:23 - 24

²³ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

So if in fact these are subtly different meanings, how would we interpret them. The key is in the phrase ‘Kingdom of God’. The word translated here as ‘of’ can also be translated ‘from’ and depending on the structure it can be used either way. Some scholars believe that it should be translated ‘from’ therefore rendering it ‘Kingdom from Heaven.’ And that would open our eyes to a different meaning.

Kingdom of God = everywhere where God’s rule is in power – heaven, earth etc.

Kingdom from Heaven = God's specific rule on earth – like when we pray 'Thy Kingdom Come' or as we look forward to the Millennial Kingdom.

This might be the reason that many 'scholars' maintain the phrases being the same, because they don't believe in a literal Kingdom on earth where Jesus rules for 1000 years.

4 Temples (<https://www.templemount.org/TM34.html>)

The Bible devotes a significant amount of space to describe the plans for the tabernacle and the temple.

📖 Exodus 25:8 – 9

⁸ And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.

But we know from Hebrews 8, as I shared on Sunday, that any temple that is seen on the earth is just a replica of the Temple in heaven.

📖 Hebrews 8:1 – 5

Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ² a Minister of the ^{1a}sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

³ For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. ⁴ For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; ⁵ who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

The First Temple (Solomon's Temple)

The First Temple geometrically resembled the tabernacle, except that it was twice the size. After the First Temple was completed (1 Kings 5 – 8), the Tabernacle of Moses was dismantled. [It may have been stored in a room under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. There is even some speculation that it may still lie there today.](#)

Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the First Temple on the 9th Av 589 BC.

The Second Temple (Zerubbabel's Temple – later known as Herod's Temple)

The Second Temple was built by Zerubbabel and the returning exiles, and was completed in 516 BC. 70 Years after its destruction. By comparison this version was far inferior to the original, but it received a significant upgrade around 20 BC when Herod recruited 10,000 workmen to work on the project.

This improved version wouldn't even last a century, destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, a fulfilment of the words of Jesus in Luke 19:41 – 44.

This is the Temple that Jesus was dedicated in (Luke 2:22 – 38); where His parents found Him at 12 years of age astounding the teachers and all who heard Him (Luke 2:46 – 50); where He cast out the money

changers on two occasions, and where he taught frequently throughout His ministry, and in particular, presented Himself each day to be questioned and heard and found faultless between His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, and the time of His arrest and Crucifixion.

Since AD 70, the Jews have centred their worship in synagogues scattered all around the world, but they have been unable to offer sacrifices because these are only permitted in the Temple. In yet another passage that clearly declares that God hasn't finished with His people Israel, all this fulfils the prophesy of Hosea:

📖 Hosea 3:4 – 5

4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. 5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

The Third Temple (The Anti-Christ's Temple)

This might sound like a bleak title, but it is the most accurate one. Of course, to this day this Temple hasn't existed. The coming Third Temple can be found described in the Old Testament, along with three passages in the New Testament:

📖 Matthew 24:15 – 21

“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand),

Since only a properly consecrated temple could be defiled, this passage, which refers to Daniel 9, a key passage outlining the events of the Great Tribulation, Jesus must be declaring clearly that the Temple will be standing, along with the articles, the priesthood and sacrifices being made during the time He is speaking about.

📖 2 Thessalonians 2:1 – 4

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Paul speaks of the same event, and of course the passage we studied a couple of weeks ago:

📖 Revelation 11:1 – 2

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

But this temple, as mentioned in the title, is the Temple of the Anti-Christ. It is possible that the temple will be rebuilt as a part of the covenant confirmed by Antichrist between Israel and ‘many nations.’ But the exact timing is uncertain. We know it will be standing at the halfway point because that is when Antichrist sits in the temple and exalts himself to be worshipped as God, as described in the 2 Thessalonians passage.

The Fourth Temple (Messiah’s (Jesus’) Temple or the Millennial Temple)

Another reason that would seem to indicate that the third temple doesn’t get built until the tribulation period begins, or at least after the Rapture of the church (there may be a period of time between the two) because from Thessalonians we understand that Antichrist can’t be revealed before the Rapture of the Church. And that for the Jews (who likely believe that Antichrist is in fact their Messiah, until the mid-point of the tribulation) they expect Messiah to build the temple He will rule from.

 Zechariah 6:13

Then speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying:

“Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the Lord; Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” ’

So ‘Messiah’s Temple’ or ‘The Millennial Temple’ will be built by Messiah Himself. The best description of it can be found in Ezekiel 40 – 45. Interestingly it will not be located in the same place as the previous three temples but it seems it will be built roughly 31 km to the north of the current location as Shiloh. What is the purpose of this Temple? Some Biblical scholars believe it will be ‘memorial’ in nature, though that might be too light a word. The idea being that it will be to instruct people about the holiness of God, the completed work of Christ, and instructions for proper worship.


Seven Openings in Revelation

 Revelation 4:1

What happens?

In chapter 4, a door is opened in heaven.

What is revealed (What do we learn)?

 Revelation 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 8:1

What happens?

In chapters 6 to 8 the seals are opened on the scroll. What's the scroll again? It is like the title deed to the earth – only Jesus qualifies to open it – to claim the earth as His own – to rule as was promised throughout the history of the world.

What is revealed?

 Revelation 9:1 – 2

What happens?

The opening in chapter 9 isn't so nice. Here the abyss is opened – but like with everything, we learn that all these things are necessary in order for things to be put in their rightful place – for the enemies of God to be overthrown, and for Christ to reign as promised.

What is revealed?

 Revelation 11:19

What happens?

The Temple of God in heaven is opened – but as I said, I believe it belongs in chapter 12 and I'll explain why in a moment.

What is revealed?

Might be jumping ahead a bit with this one – but any suggestions?

 Revelation 15:5

What happens?

What is revealed?

I'm looking forward to digging into this one but haven't studied it yet. Especially 'temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven' that's a phrase to catch my interest.

 Revelation 19:11

What Happens?

What is revealed?

What is the contrast to Revelation 4:1?

In chapter 19 Heaven is opened – and this is a contrast to chapter 4, because in chapter 4 the door is opened so that John can come up into heaven – however in chapter 19, heaven is opened to allow Jesus to step onto the world stage again.

 Revelation 20:12

What happens?

And then finally in chapter 20 the books were opened – the book of Life – and the books of judgment.

What is revealed?