

“KINGDOM OF HEAVEN”/“KINGDOM OF GOD”/“CHURCH” IN THE GOSPELS

Virgil Warren, PhD

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
3:2			
			3:3
			3:5
	1:14		
<u>4:17</u>	<u>1:15</u>		
		4:43	
<u>5:3</u>		<u>6:20</u>	
5:10			
5:19			
5:20			
6:33 (K of G)			
7:21			
<u>[8:11]</u>		[cp. <u>13:28-29</u>]	
<u>11:11</u>		<u>7:28</u>	
<u>[11:12]</u>		[cp. <u>16:16</u>]	
		8:1	
12:28 (K of G)			
<u>13:11</u>	<u>4:11</u>	<u>8:10</u>	
<u>13:24</u>	<u>4:26</u>		
<u>13:31</u>	<u>4:30</u>		
13:44			
13:45			
13:47			
13:52			
		9:60	
		9:62	
<u>10:7</u>		<u>9:2</u>	
		9:11	
16:18 (church)			
16:19			
[16:28 (his kingdom) 9:1		9:27]	
18:1			
<u>[18:3]</u>	[cp. <u>10:15</u>]	[cp. <u>18:17</u>]	
18:4			
	9:47		
18:17 ² (church)			
18:23			

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
		10:9	
		10:11	
		11:20	
		12:31	
		13:18	
		13:20	
		13:28	
		13:29	
		14:1	
		16:16	
		17:20	
		17:21	
19:12			
<u>19:14</u>	<u>10:14</u>	<u>18:16</u>	
<u>19:23</u>	<u>10:23</u>	<u>18:24</u>	
	10:24		
19:24 (K of G)	10:25	18:25	
		18:29	
20:1			
		19:11	
21:31 (K of G)			
21:43 (K of G)			
22:2			
	12:34		
		21:31	
25:1			
		22:16	
26:29 (Father's K)	14:25	22:18	
	15:43	23:51	

In the chart above , “kingdom of heaven” occurs in all the Matthew references except the five places where “(K of G)” appears after the entry: **6:33**; **12:28**; **19:24**; **21:31**, 43. “His kingdom” appears in **16:28**, and “Father’s kingdom” is in **26:29**. All the references in Mark, Luke, and John say “kingdom of God” in the passages indicated.

Bold-faced print with underlining appears nine times where Matthew parallels the other synoptics and shows “kingdom of heaven” where they say “kingdom of God.” Additionally, there are three places (shown in brackets) that are not clearly parallel occasions, but they have similar wordings except for “kingdom of heaven/God.”

Matthew **19:23-24** uses both designations for the kingdom in the scope of two verses in a repeated statement that contains one title one time and the other title the second time.

Matthew **16:18** joins “kingdom of heaven” and “church” in the same flow of thought. As a result, “kingdom of heaven,” “kingdom of God,” and “church” are three terms for the same thing.

A couple of reasons can explain Matthew’s practice. Perhaps (1) he was trying to emphasize the transcendent, interpersonal, spiritual nature of the kingdom in contrast to the earthly, political kingdom the Jews had been expecting the Messiah to establish. Another suggestion has been that (2) he was using “heaven” as a substitute for “God” in much the way the prodigal son spoke of “sinning against Heaven” (Luke **15:18, 24**). Such usage would not necessarily have been to avoid offending the sensitivities of contemporary Judaism in the use of the divine name. It could simply have become a habitual way of speaking. The other gospels show no concern to avoid the term “God,” although they—as well as the rest of the New Testament writings—do follow current custom by using the Greek word *Lord* (κύριος) in place of the personal name (יהוה, *Yahveh*), which had become ineffable in Jewish custom. The sense that Matthew’s gospel was aimed more deliberately at a Jewish audience may have made this practice more natural, but it would not have required it.

christir.org