

The Kingdom of Heaven/The Kingdom of God

The term Kingdom of God is used in the four Gospels and most of the Epistles in the New Testament. The kingdom they are concerned with is the Daniel 2:44 kingdom that the God of heaven will set up (see Daniel 2:36-44 for the fuller context). Know and understand that God, through Daniel, teaches that there will be only five world empires before the New Earth and New Heaven comes. Note – there have been kingdoms dominating and ruling over much of the world, but not in the prophetic way and time as these five concerning Christ, Israel and God’s plan for mankind.

Four of those kingdoms are of the Gentiles, which rule over the earth through the end of the age (the age of Israel and the nations). Christ then comes again or rather, returns, and sets up the fifth kingdom where He reigns over the whole world. There will be no end to His reign; it will be eternal.

Before Christ returns, though, there will be a false Christ who will rise up out of the Roman or fourth world empire who will try and set up a counterfeit or false kingdom and set his own image up to be worshiped as God. Read Daniel 2, 7, 9; 2 Thessalonians and Revelation 6-20 for more insight into the false, or what is referred to as Antichrist. Christ Jesus Himself teaches about the last or 70th week of years (7 literal years), the Tribulation, which He refers to as birth pains, before His return (see Matthew 24).

The times of the Gentiles, as Jesus says Himself in Luke, and their age before Christ actually returns and reigns on earth, directly corresponds with the remaining time of Daniel’s people, Israel, 70 weeks of years (490 literal years) prophetically speaking. Daniel 9:26-27 demonstrates this clearly.

Daniel 9:24 lists six specific things that are to be accomplished by the beginning of Christ’s reign or the end of the 70 weeks of years determined on the Jewish nation. We must understand that it is about the national issue here in Daniel 9:24-27 as Jews will sin individually in the kingdom, but national Israel will not.

Israel’s Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God

Jesus, in John 3:3, says to one of Israel’s teachers that a man must be born again to see the kingdom of God and calls this, in verses 5 and 7, being born of the Spirit. He tells this teacher of Israel that he “should not be surprised at my saying you must be born again”. The point is that the nation Israel will, in the kingdom of Heaven/kingdom of God, be made up of those who are born again of the Spirit of God and will, as a nation, never turn away from God again. There will still be sin by individuals, as there is today by born again members of the Body of Christ. The nation, as a nation, will never be punished again for sin. Simply study the books of the Prophets for more about Israel and Christ’s kingdom. Sin in the kingdom is limited to the 1,000 year reign, as the uncorrupted eternal New Earth and New Heaven will then come, where God will dwell with man; no more death or sorrow. To understand more fully what the death of Christ Jesus accomplished, study thoroughly the Epistles.

It is critical to know that when Jesus came to earth it was during the fourth world empire mentioned in Daniel 2. In the Gospels Jesus came for various reasons as prophesied.

The preparing the nation Israel for entrance into God's kingdom and bringing in God's kingdom, including His death that would make possible their entrance, is what we are going to focus on. We already have tools in the Toolbox for the Body of Christ that explain and or demonstrate that the Gospels are Christ addressing Israel. We will now be concerned with John the Baptist and Christ preparing Israel for entrance into the kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God, which includes repentance of those in Israel who were not keeping the Mosaic Law under that covenant, per se, preparing them for spiritual birth necessary for entrance. Spiritual birth was promised by God in the Old Testament (see Ezekiel 36). Note – Deuteronomy 6:24-25 demonstrates that the law Moses delivered per God's will was temporarily a righteousness for Israel, if they kept it.

The nation Israel, in the Gospels, is being given instructions about the Daniel 2:44 kingdom by the Christ Himself in Matthew, Mark and Luke, under the Mosaic covenant of law.

Read through the synoptic Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke from the same vantage point, under law – not grace, carefully paying close attention to the language and context therein.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is bringing in grace and truth to Israel. If you are not careful you will, at first glance, think you are reading about the Body of Christ, that is, the Church, because of faith in Jesus and spiritual birth. Paul teaches in Galatians 3 that the Jews were in custody under the law until faith came. He was first pointing out the promise to Abraham, then hundreds of years later the Mosaic Law was given and why it was given and how long it would be in place and that it would lead Israel, not the nations, to Christ, the promised seed of Abraham, who along with Abraham was given the same promise of the future (see Galatians 3, 4).

Jeremiah 31, beginning in verse 31, explains that God would, in the future, make a new covenant with Israel which would not be like the old one. It would be written on hearts instead of stone tablets or other earthly materials.

Jesus taught in John that Israel was to believe in Him – that His blood and body would be sacrificed for them. Also, Jesus would die for the sins of the whole world. John the Baptist taught that later, Jesus, coming after him, would baptize them (Israel) with the Spirit and fire (judge them for purification as a people through tribulation). God does, as one will read, constantly bring judgments and blessing on Israel throughout their time from Moses to the coming of Christ, but not like the nation will experience during the 70th week or final 7 years of the age.

The language will be very different at times compared to the synoptics – Matthew, Mark and Luke. Do not allow yourself to be drawn into believing it is addressing the Church. Read in context any teaching in God's Word, especially the Gospels and Epistles.

In John, Jesus is also the prophet who was prophesied to come to Israel, per Deuteronomy 18, in whom God would put His words or commands in the mouth of – commands from the Father in heaven who was going to set up a kingdom. Israel did not need new law commands and John chapter 1 says Jesus would bring in grace and truth. Remember, Paul taught that Israel was in custody under the law until Jesus, the seed of Abraham, came. Then they would be under faith.

Concerning the term “kingdom of heaven”, during Christ’s 3 ½ year ministry, He used the terms kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God.

Some scholars say that Matthew simply preferred the term kingdom of heaven. Some will teach that the kingdom of heaven was in the greater kingdom of God. You will see in the following list why this is not the case at all. This first list will demonstrate that they are one and the same. The sovereign rule of God, from His throne, over His entire creation should not be confused with the fifth kingdom in Daniel 2:44 that the “God of heaven will set up” on the earth. One last thing to know, but is of the greatest import: Jesus was on earth teaching or instructing on the good news of the kingdom, the Daniel 2:44 kingdom, while He and the nation were under the law, strictly, all the while looking to the 70th week judgment or wrath (birth pains) and then entrance into, or not, the kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God.

While the kingdom had not yet come down to earth to be set up by the Bridegroom/King, Jesus was looking to His rejection and death all the while announcing that the kingdom is near, God has come to them, which they would not recognize.

Read Jesus’ laments over Jerusalem in Luke 13 and 19. These, in their context, demonstrate that He was indeed there to bring the kingdom down from heaven and set it up on the earth. Do not mistake Israel’s rejection of Christ as Him not really coming for that purpose. What is prophesied is that when He, the Christ, would come, they would reject Him and the death He would suffer would be God the Father’s time for providing payment through Christ for forgiveness of sin. The leaders of the nation and much of the nation did not believe Jesus was Christ. Jesus’ death was academic – He had to die for the six things listed in Daniel 9:24 to be possible. Jesus looked to the end of the age for all nations on earth, including Israel, when speaking about His rejection (speaking in parables), including God’s wrath on the whole earth and His ultimate return to then judge all nations for spiritual birth and therefore, entrance into the kingdom.

Jesus, looking from the 69th week of years past the undetermined period of time between the 69th and 70th weeks of years and on to the 70th week of years, including the end thereof and His return, is referred to as prophetic time. His teaching literally looks past the so-called time of grace or age of grace. Jesus never addressed Israel the way He, through His disciples, later addressed the Body of Christ. He did not address Israel in the Gospels as a present, or future, heavenly people. They are always earthly. All of the Gospels are the Christ addressing Israel and fulfilling prophecy. The Gospels are accounts of the Christ and His coming. Textual criticism of the Greek manuscripts demonstrates that the Gospels were not originally called gospels. They were untitled and clearly they give the accounts of His coming and actions and words while He is on the earth.

The first list is a list of passages from the Gospels that prove that the kingdom of heaven is the exact same kingdom as the kingdom of God that the “God of heaven will set up”; the one Christ instructs about in the Gospels.

We will give kingdom of heaven passages and corresponding passages from other Gospels that use the phrase “kingdom of God”. The phrase “kingdom of heaven” is only found in Matthew; the phrase “kingdom of God” is found in all four Gospels.

List 1. The Kingdom of Heaven/the Kingdom of God Comparative List in the Synoptic Gospels

Kingdom of Heaven = Kingdom of God = Kingdom of God

Matthew 4:17	Mark 1:15	
Matthew 5:3		Luke 6:20
Matthew 8:11-12		Luke 13:28-30
Matthew 11:10-11		Luke 7:27-28
Matthew 13:10-11	Mark 4:10-11	Luke 8:9-10
Matthew 13:31-32	Mark 4:30-32	
Matthew 19:14	Mark 10:14	
Matthew 19:23-25	Mark 10:23-25	Luke 18:24-25

Below is a list with some verses taken from an NIV exhaustive concordance. These verses demonstrate that the kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God, mentioned in the Gospel accounts of the Christ coming to Israel alone, is a kingdom that will come from somewhere besides earth, from God, that is, it becomes earthly, but comes down from God; Daniel 2:44 says that the God of heaven will set up a kingdom. Colossians 1:13, 1 Corinthians 15:50 and John 18:36 clearly demonstrate where it originates. Jesus is speaking from this knowledge.

List 2. The Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God, From Another Place Besides Earth

Matthew 3:2; 4:17 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (These simply show God has not set up the kingdom yet.)

Matthew 6:10 "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth."

Matthew 12:28 "... then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Matthew 16:28 "... the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Mark 10:15 "... anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God. . ."

Mark 11:10 "... the coming kingdom of our father David." (Compare with John 18:36)

Luke 22:18 "... of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

Luke 23:51 "... of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom."

John 18:36 "Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world' . . ."

John 18:36 "... but now my kingdom is from another place . . ." (All passages on this list should be held next to Matthew 6:10.)

It is the kingdom given to the Christ for eternity, to rule from the throne of David as promised to David, referred to as the Davidic Covenant. Read Daniel 2:36-44 and 2 Samuel 7:16 for insight, as well as other prophecies throughout the Prophets by looking up passages that pertain to the eternal rule of Christ. The term or phrase "Davidic Covenant" is simply applied by scholarship; the term is not used, per se, by the Holy Scriptures.

God made a promise to David and approximately 400 years later God spoke through Daniel in 2:44 and other places in Daniel concerning the promised reign, which is still to come.

Below is a list which demonstrates that the kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God is to be entered, or not; those who will be judged when Christ is setting up the kingdom on the earth can also be thrown out of the kingdom. There will be Old Testament saints in the kingdom and there will be service in the kingdom.

List 3. Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven/the Kingdom of God – or Not

Matthew 5:20 “You will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven. . .”

Matthew 8:11 “. . . Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 8:12 “. . . the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside.”

Matthew 13:41 “. . . and they will weed out of His kingdom everything . . .”

Matthew 13:43 “. . . the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom.”

Matthew 18:3 “. . . you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 19:23 “. . . for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 20:21 “. . . and the other at your left in your kingdom.”

Matthew 26:29 “. . . with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

Mark 9:47 “It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God. . .”

Mark 10:47 “. . . how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God.”

Luke 9:62 “. . . and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom.”

Luke 13:28 “. . . Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom.”

Luke 14:15 “. . . the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom.”

Luke 22:16 “. . . until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

Luke 22:30 “. . . at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones . . .”

The following list contains some verses which will demonstrate how entrance into the kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God is attained; the lost in Israel needing a turning back to God through righteous works of the law of Moses as a righteousness for them, as taught in Matthew, Mark and Luke; believing in Christ who came from the Father literally, for being born again at a future time when the kingdom is ready to enter at His return, in John. The return, of course, will be after the death and resurrection of Christ and judgment of wrath poured on the whole world. Jesus’ coming the first time is “His coming”. He was to fulfill all righteousness concerning His coming, including being rejected. Acts 2 simply proves God knew of His rejection and had determined to use that time for sacrificing His Lamb and the choosing of Christ’s mysterious Bride who would also be called His Body.

The requirements in Matthew, Mark and Luke make it seem almost impossible to enter the kingdom but as Christ mentions, nothing is impossible with God. He explains, as is demonstrated throughout God’s Word, it is impossible with man (meaning that man has no righteousness of his own that can save him). Man requires God’s righteousness for salvation from His wrath, including all the ramifications for being saved, or not saved, for eternity, according to God’s plans. In the synoptics, they had to keep the law as always. They were strictly under the old covenant. In John, in anticipation of Christ’s death, a promised new covenant was in the works. We see a transition in place and overlap of sorts which would require the sacrifice of Christ.

Just study the following list of verses, understanding the perspective of Israel being addressed by the Christ for attaining entrance into His kingdom on earth; the Christ and Israel are under law, not grace. In John, Jesus was bringing in grace and truth, but He was rejected and killed.

Notice, also, the difficulty of entrance into the earthly kingdom. Righteous acts commanded to be worked, by God, under Israel's law include a person of wealth being helpful to the poor, the wealthy not loving their wealth more than the will of their God and His commands, etc. Whether someone is poor, middle class or wealthy, God is more important. Jesus points this out because the wealthy (not all) oppress people, especially by their power politically. The poor and helpless will be oppressed as a way of life, mostly neglected.

List 4. How to Gain Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God

First, some verses quoted with some commentary, then a simple concordance list for thorough study, as a tool.

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." Read verses 13-23 for full context; compare with Luke 3:3-17. Israel is being turned back to God by John the Baptist and Jesus; they are to keep the law, doing the works of the law, a righteousness for them (see Deut. 6: 24-25). They are cursed if they do not keep them. This is their righteousness until the seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ, comes when the law covenant will be set aside and faith will be put in place. Read Galatians 3 for Paul's explanation.

Matthew 5:20 "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of Heaven." This is addressed to Israelites under a covenant of law. John the Baptist and Jesus are calling them to repent and turn back to God's laws of righteousness for them at that time.

Read Luke 17:21 where Jesus says to Jewish leaders that the kingdom is within, meaning one must be keeping the law which is righteousness for them, as already stated previously, in order to enter the kingdom they inquire about. Jesus, throughout the Gospels, exposes their corruption and unrighteous, evil hearts. Read Matthew 23 for a fuller accounting of the evil leadership, including their prevention of people entering the kingdom who want to enter. These are the Lord's words. Read Matthew 3:7-12 to see what John the Baptist says to the unrepentant leadership. More examples will be given later when explaining Luke 17:21.

Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate . . ." Read further as you study this verse. In the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), Jesus and John the Baptist are giving the good news of the kingdom coming and it is already near. They are turning Israel to God in repentance – back under God's law. They are not speaking of spiritual birth in these gospels. In a passage on attaining to eternal life, as explained in Matthew 19:16-19, Jesus answers the question about how to get eternal life. Jesus' explanation includes these words: ". . . if you want to enter life, keep the commandments." "The man then asked: "Which ones?" . . . Then Jesus replied, "you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery . . ." The Christ said nothing of faith saving anyone in these direct questions on eternal life in the synoptics.

When reading John, however, we see that the Jews were to believe the prophet raised up like Moses, who spoke of believing the prophet to come and Jesus was from the Father directly and said they, the Jews, were to believe in Him for entering the kingdom. If one does not separate John from the synoptics, one will not understand what is said; John will not be able to be reconciled with Matthew, Mark and Luke. In John 5 Jesus also says that it is God's work that they (the Israelites) believe in Him and when they do, they will crossover from death to life.

Jesus would have to die in John for it to be possible to have spiritual birth. The Scriptures, in the Old Testament, teach that Israel must turn to God, under law-keeping or keeping God's commands, decrees, etc.; they would reject Messiah, that is, the Christ; the destruction of the temple; wars and desolations are determined; then wrath on the whole world, including Israel; Christ coming and Israel passing under the rod for entrance, or not, into the kingdom by being meek and humble or rebellious; the nations being judged for entrance, or not; those denied entrance cast into the lake of burning sulphur, those given entrance will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of God promised to Israel and in John 3:3 Jesus said a man must be born again to see the kingdom of God. Matthew, Mark and Luke concentrate on obedience to God, keeping the law for passing under the rod in Ezekiel 20:33-44. John is concentrating on believing in Christ for receiving the Holy Spirit later for seeing or entering the kingdom. Read Ezekiel 36 and John 7 with special attention to verses 19-39 (note verses 37-39).

Jesus was not looking to the Body of Christ. He was including, in the Gospels, His rejection, the temple's destruction, the holy city's desolation, unexplained wars and desolations, His wrath on the whole world, His return (including the judgments of Israel and the nations, as already explained and listed). See also Daniel 9:24-27 for the prophetic perspective of the Lord and the Gospels.

Jesus, in the Gospels (that includes any of the kingdom of heaven parables) never explained what is only later explained as a mystery – the Body of Christ – in the Epistles, under grace, predestined to be in Christ, before the creation of the world. (When the words "predestined" or "predetermined" are used, be sure to keep passages in context or you will conceivably be deceived.) The apostle Paul is given this task by the Lord and the Holy Spirit, as one clearly sees when reading Paul's letters. When Paul is converted by the Lord Himself in Acts 9, He assigns Paul his duties. Read Paul's testimonies throughout Acts and his Epistles.

You can see why it is important and quite necessary to know the context of passages of Scripture as well as paying attention to the language used. One should certainly recognize why it is important to know the contents of both the Old and New Testaments in God's Word. It is important because together they contain God's complete, or whole, plan from Genesis to Revelation. Paul tells Timothy that he is to rightly handle God's Word in 2 Timothy 2:15.

After knowing what the Gospels say and teach, one must then know what is said and taught concerning the Body of Christ in the Epistles, then compare the facts, language and context.

The following list demonstrates physical entrance into Christ's kingdom from heaven (the kingdom of heaven/the kingdom of God), including the fact that it is said by Christ that it is difficult to enter. Luke 13:24 is saying that it will take the expenditure of all of their physical energy (in the Greek wording, that is,

all the physical energy of an athlete). These lists are literal, not allegory. Jesus, the Son of God, is absolutely serious about eternal life. His entire focus is on God's will. Jesus is looking to the end of the age and reigning over Israel and the nations. He is concerned about which individuals of all the nations are going to enter the kingdom and His message is to every Jew under the covenant law and promises given by God.

Here is the rest of list 4 without commentary:

Matthew 18:8 “. . . for you to enter life maimed or crippled than . . .”

Matthew 18:9 “. . . to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes . . .”

Matthew 19:23 “. . . for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven . . .”

Matthew 19:24 “. . . the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter . . .”

Matthew 23:13 “. . .nor will you let these enter who are trying to.”

Mark 10:15 “. . . of God like a little child will never enter it . . .”

Luke 13:24 “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.”

John 3:5 “. . . no one can enter the kingdom of God. . . ” (read all of John 3)

Bear in mind the difference between John and the synoptics.

The Kingdom of Heaven/The Kingdom of God
Concerning the Body of Christ in the Epistles

Now we come to the Epistles where we will look at the kingdom of heaven/the kingdom of God concerning the Body of Christ, the Daniel 2:44 kingdom, which is currently in heaven because it has yet to come down to earth from God. Jesus, before His death, said in John 18:36 that His kingdom was not from this world. Jesus taught His disciples to pray “. . . your kingdom come,” in Matthew 6:10. God's kingdom had not come yet. God's Word says Satan is the god of this age (see Matthew 4:8-10; 2 Corinthians 4:4 for insight).

At no time in the Old or New Testaments is Israel promised to be taken to heaven, physically or otherwise. Israel, throughout the Old Testament, is promised a kingdom set up on earth and the Lord will come to the earth and dwell with them and men and women will go entreat of Him on the Mount. Only in John 14 where Jesus is now about to be sacrificed by God the Father does He speak of bringing humans into heaven. He is addressing His disciples who are going to be doing work which they know nothing about. Jesus is addressing them now as His friends and He explains only that He will come someday in the future to receive them to Himself. He tells them that there are many dwellings where His Father is, in heaven. Jesus also says He is going to heaven to prepare a place for them.

Jesus describes the time of tribulation Israel and the whole world will go through in Matthew 24, including His return to the earth to sit on His throne in Israel, the throne of His father David. God promised David, in 2 Samuel 7:16, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be

established forever.” Compare this passage to Daniel 2:44 about the kingdom the God of heaven will set up.

For the Body of Christ, when reading 2 Corinthians 5, we find that while “we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.” (5:6); “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” (5:8).

When a member of the Body of Christ is in their earthly body they are away from not only our Lord, but away from our home, that is, our heavenly dwelling which is waiting for us to depart this earthly body. Our heavenly body is waiting where our citizenship is, according to Paul in Philippians 3:20; where we are seated in the heavenlies, according to Paul in Ephesians 2:6; where we are waiting to be caught up to, according to Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 when we will then be with the Lord forever (note verse 17). Second Corinthians 5 tells the Body of Christ that we are clothed upon death, but later we are given our original body made glorious (1 Corinthians 15).

Everything in the Old Testament concerning a remnant of Israel which will, in the future, be saved as the nation Israel and a remnant of the nations, per Matthew 25:31-46 per the Lord’s own words, explain judgment and entrance, or not, into the kingdom which the Lord will reside in and rule over. The Gospels are only accounts of the Messiah/Christ, including the forerunner John the Baptist, preparing the nation Israel for entrance into the kingdom of heaven/the kingdom of God.

Paul teaches in Colossians 1:13 that the member of the body is already brought into the kingdom having been rescued from the domain or dominion of darkness. We, as already demonstrated in Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians, are residents in heaven having our dwelling place, citizenship and future transportation to heaven in 1 Thessalonians, as we are simply waiting for that appointed time to come about. In Colossians 3 we also find that our lives are hidden with Christ (the Head connected to the body) in God where we, the members, are seated with Christ, with God until Christ, in Revelation 19, comes back to the earth to reign forever (see also Ephesians 2:6).

The members of Christ’s Body are taught that we are to have our hearts and minds set on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Everything about and for the member of the Body of Christ is heavenly. We are also told we are to have our minds on things above, not on earthly things (Colossians 3:1-3). So, even our minds are not supposed to be earthly.

We come now to the crux of the matter for the Body of Christ. First Corinthians 15:35-58 contains an explanation of birth in a flesh body just like Adam, born of material of the earth, and likewise, birth of, or in, a spiritual body like the resurrected body the last Adam has, made of what is spirit. Paul teaches in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, that the dead (those asleep – the body, not soul) in Christ will be raised and caught up together with those who remain alive (the body still being alive). First Corinthians includes the fact of the bodies actually being changed from earthly to spiritual, as the Lord’s is glorious and spiritual (see Philippians 3:21 and 1 John 3:2, as well).

Between the explanation of the types of Adamic bodies and the change from the earthly to the spiritual, this statement is made “I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit_

the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.” (1 Corinthians 15:50). Paul is explaining that flesh and blood bodies cannot enter the kingdom of heaven/the kingdom of God.

We see in the Old Testament and the Gospels that flesh and blood, by all accounts, enter the kingdom the God of heaven will set up on earth. Scripture will demonstrate that people in the earthly kingdom can die and at the end of the 1,000 year reign, masses of people will be destroyed by Christ Himself (see Revelation).

We also see throughout Scripture that people in the kingdom can rebel. No one in a spiritual body (except angels, per Scripture), born of the Spirit and in a body that is spirit in material, is rebellious anywhere in Scripture. Remember, angels are created in a direct act, as spirits. They are not born spiritually as men are. There is no Scripture where God tells us that He indwells angels. They can be, and many are, condemned already, whereas, a born again man can never be condemned, as Paul teaches in Romans 8:1. (Concerning demons, no specific information is given concerning their origin. Many believe demons are fallen angels but there is no explicit passage that teaches that. There are other teachings on demons but we are not concerned about them in this tool.) Actually, we are not aware of any explanation of demons in Scripture at all. Deductions have to be made by a preponderance of evidence.

Note: the King James translation of the English Bible will have qualifiers at Romans 8:1, but those last two clauses were added by scribes in later centuries as is easily proved in textual criticism. The earliest manuscript used by the KJV translators was 11th century. Some scholars may say the 10th century. The verse only states that there is no condemnation for those in Christ. The qualifiers are found a few verses later in a different context.

After verse 50 in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul explains a mystery. This mystery is the fact that the flesh bodies of the members of the Body of Christ are changed into spiritual bodies for physical entrance into the kingdom of heaven/the kingdom of God. The dead bodies are raised and changed; the live bodies are changed and this happens in an instant. Scripture, in 2 Corinthians 5, teaches that there are dwellings that wait for the believer who departs presently until the 1 Corinthians 15 resurrection takes place.

This is also another element to defend the catching out, or what is termed the rapture - the word transliterated from the Latin. Also, this proves a pre-tribulation rapture because the Body of Christ is not appointed to wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9) and we are kept from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth (Revelation 3:10). The defense of the pre-tribulation rapture is that the kingdom must come down to earthly people; the Body of Christ goes to the kingdom before it comes down. (The pre-tribulation rapture or catching up of the Body of Christ is a doctrine that will be installed in the tool box. It is mentioned on our doctrine pages.)

So, positionally, the Body of Christ presently resides in heaven with Christ and physically is either alive in unchanged bodies, or their flesh body is dead and unchanged. Paul teaches in his letters that the Body of Christ is waiting for the adoption of our bodies. He teaches that we are indwelt by the Spirit as a down payment guaranteeing what is to come (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5).

While we are here in the flesh, earthly material, we will suffer in different ways, like Christ suffered in His flesh body. He then died and was raised in a glorious body, just as we are promised (Philippians

3:21). I add this because there are passages and teachings in the Epistles which claim and explain suffering and judgment of the member of the Body of Christ before physically entering the kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God. Believers will sin (we confess for forgiveness, 1 John 1:9) and be persecuted because we call Christ our Lord and we have a Father who will discipline us. Read the Epistles of Paul and Hebrews 12.

We are already positionally in God's kingdom. We are under His New Covenant. We are marked in Christ by the Spirit as a down payment guaranteeing that we will be removed before God's and Christ's wrath come on all the inhabitants of the earth, but :

We will suffer before we physically enter (Paul's and Peter's Epistles).

We are to be focused on things above with our heart and mind where we are seated with Christ and the Father (Colossians 3:1-3; Ephesians 2:6).

We are gifted by the Spirit to help build up the Body (1 Corinthians 12:1-11, note verse 7).

We have works created for us to do (Ephesians 2:10, 4:12).

We are fellow workers with God (examples – Romans 16:3, 9; Ephesians 2:10).

We are God's righteousness in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21; also see Romans 3:21-22 in conjunction).

Our lives are not our own, they were purchased by Christ's blood (1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23).

These truths and all things that obtain under grace, in Christ, are given to the Body of Christ in the Epistles. Please see our tool called 'In Christ'.

Luke 17:21 "The kingdom of God is within you" or "in your midst"

Let's look at Luke 17:21 and a number of other passages where Jesus is dealing with the rulers and teachers of the people of Israel, most of which was after John the Baptist began, calling to repentance, turning Jews from wickedness back to God, preparing God's chosen assembly, the people of His covenant, for entrance into the kingdom of heaven/the kingdom of God.

Bear in mind at this point that Matthew, Mark and Luke are about turning the nation Israel back to keeping the Mosaic covenant of law, decrees and commands for them as a righteousness.

That law also taught Israel that the Christ - Anointed One – was going to give them God's commands, some commands they did not know. In John, Jesus speaks of believing in Him personally for eternal life. He said they, and anyone seeing the kingdom of God, would have to be born again. John was revealing Jesus to Israel by baptizing Jews, upon their repentance, in water, for forgiveness; Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (judgment). Their message was "repent, the kingdom of God is near".

Luke 17:21 says ". . . nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst." This is what Jesus said once, when asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God would come. He first said, though, ". . . The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed," (Luke 17:20).

In verse 22 Jesus, speaking to His disciples, and no doubt to future readers, of the days of His return to earth, says that “the time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it . . .”. Jesus then goes on to describe His actual return followed by signs, recognizable, in the sky, in His day (the day of the Lord, not to be confused with the period of time called the day of the Lord which includes Christ’s 1,000 year reign in the kingdom before the new earth comes). Scripture teaches that the time period of the 70th week in Daniel to the end of the 1,000 year reign is called the day of the Lord and the actual day Jesus returns to the earth is also called the day of the Lord (the great and dreadful day of the Lord).

We will now look at the word translated “within” and “in the midst of” or “among” as some define the Greek word “entos”. Most will translate the word “entos” as in “the midst of” in the newest translations of the English. Most used to translate “entos” as “within you”.

According to the prominent Greek scholar A. T. Robertson, in his “Word Pictures in the New Testament” vol. 2, page 229, he quotes Bruce, who in one of his writings quotes a man named Field who “contends that there is no clear instance of entos in the sense of among”. Robertson, then says “and rightly so.” He then explains what Jesus says to the Pharisees is that they, as others, are to look for the kingdom of God within themselves, not in outward displays and supernatural manifestations. It is not a localized display “here” or “there”. It is in this sense that in Luke 11:20 Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God as “come upon you” (ephthasen eph Dhumas); speaking to Pharisees. The only other instance of entos in the New Testament (Matthew 23:26) necessarily means “within” (“the inside of the cup”).

Jesus, who came to be King of Israel at that time, was truly in their midst or among them, but this is not argued in Luke 17:21. And what Robertson is saying is that every Jew in Israel was to be found righteous inside, as the Lord was alluding to in Luke 17:21 as He had alluded to in Luke 11:20, which was crystal clear concerning their unrighteousness.

It is even clearer when reading the list of passages below.

List 5.

Jesus, teaching His disciples, said in Matthew 5:20 that to enter the kingdom of God their righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

Study these passages with their context for the spiritual condition of the Pharisees, and at times, other leaders like the teachers of the law and/or the chief priests.

Jesus condemned the Pharisees in these passages. This list is only a sample, though. It is to demonstrate more fully the unrighteous condition of the Pharisees’ hearts – “within” them. The “within”, the cup being dirty on the inside, as (A. T. Robertson mentioned) in Matthew 23:26.

Matthew 9:27-34
Matthew 12:1-14
Matthew 12:22-45
Matthew 15:1-15
Matthew 16:1-12

Matthew 21:28-46; 22:1-14
Matthew 22:15-22
Matthew 23:13 (note this passage)
Matthew 23:15 (note this passage)
Matthew 23:23-24
Matthew 23:25-26 (note this passage)
Matthew 23:27-28 (note this passage)
Matthew 23:29-32 (note 31-22)
Matthew 23:33 (note this passage)
Matthew 27:62-65

Read Mark, Luke and John for similar condemnation from the Lord Jesus Christ towards the Pharisees, specifically, but much of the time He will be addressing the chief priests and teachers of the law as well.

These passages in Matthew are given to make abundantly clear what Jesus is saying in meaning to the Pharisees in Luke 17:20-21 about where the kingdom of God is.

We have shown in the lists: entrance into; service in; denied entrance into; difficulty entering; casting people out of; spiritual birth required for seeing (entering); righteousness surpassing that of the Pharisees for seeing (entering).

The kingdom of God is not in the heart as meaning that it is not real. The kingdom can only be entered by the Pharisees if they repent of their wickedness or corruption. Jesus said they are keeping people from entering and they themselves were not entering.

When reading these tools, you will notice some statements being used over and over. These statements are necessary for perspective, as much explanation is required to keep focus and train of thought.

Please study the passages given and do not get frustrated if it seems a bit confusing at first. Only after gaining more and more familiarity with God's Word will doctrines seem clearer. These tools are for guiding and instructing the members of the Body of Christ concerning God's Words. Study and learn as much as you desire at your own pace. Knowing God's Words will transform every believer (see Romans 12:1-2). The more we understand, the more our hunger is for God's Words and the changing of our lives to righteous and pure living.