

Word of the Kingdom Conference 2008

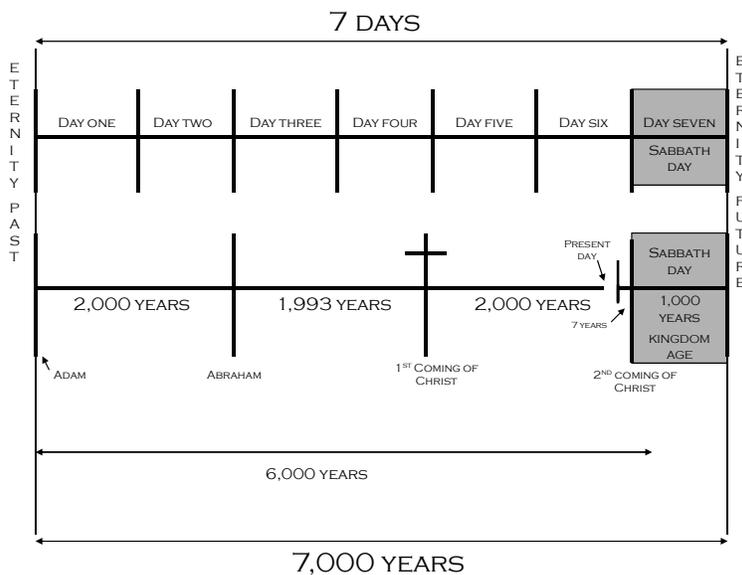
Part II

Distinctions within the Overall Scope of Scripture

In our last message we began looking at some questions about the Bible and have understood that questions, which are asked of the Bible, need to be answered from the Bible. They also needed to be answered with the CONTEXT of the overall scope of Scripture beginning the foundational things...things that God saw fit to lay out in the beginning of His Word, which teach us foundational things, which must be in place if we are to understand correctly. One cannot begin to build understanding correctly if he begins at a place other than where God began. One cannot build upon a different foundation than what is laid out by God, and expect to build correct understanding. That makes sense, doesn't it?

And though we did not spend time in the last meeting, it can easily be seen in the first chapter of the Bible, that subsequent to perfectly creating the heavens and the earth, and subsequent to the earth's desecration, God took six days to restore the ruined creation, and He rested on the Seventh day. Much could be taught on this arrangement, this "6 days of work and 7th day of rest" arrangement (there are plenty of materials available to one to study well on the topic), but suffice it to say, this "6 days of work and 7th day of rest" lays out a pattern that is followed in Scripture from beginning to end. There is *yet a 7th day of rest for the people of God* (Heb. 4:9). And this foundational fact alone reveals much in the way of prophecy (future events) if one would but study it out according to the way God gave it.

But one thing about this 7-day pattern that we need to understand as we proceed forward is that this foundational time-line, if you will, gives us insight into some major things that would otherwise remain a mystery, if we did not understand it properly. Again, it is about CONTEXT, overall scope, and foundation set forth at the beginning. God began here for a reason. And He continues from that point, with reason and purpose and design, so as to allow us to understand what HE wants us to understand. He gives His Word in a specific way, and if we want to understand it, we need to see how He gave it. Within the foundational chapter of Scripture. God lays out this timeline:



But rather than spending time on this time line (remember there are materials), I think it is a good idea to deal with some terms today that may help clear up some confusion when it comes to reading and studying Scripture. I would like to work through terms with Scriptural references and perhaps some definitions, showing how these terms are used in Scripture, and why they are important.

Let's touch on something that we touched on last night...the *free gift of salvation*. We must see and understand this doctrine in the context of the overall scope of Scripture.

We saw that when God created man He created them in His Image and likeness. We know that the Godhead exists in three parts: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If God created man in his image and likeness, then without question God made him in three parts! We are not left to guess at this, but Scripture bears this out in both testaments. But to see it most clearly, let's turn to what Paul said to the Church in Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So let's look to see how salvation deals with all three parts of man. Spirit is always mentioned first in Scripture, when the three parts are used together. And it is the spirit that is affected through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. He did this entire work for us. We have nothing to do but believe. (Remember what Paul said to the Philippian jailer.) This gives us spiritual life. And the Gift that comes through faith is eternal life.

Look at our time line. (Put time line in slides again)

When does eternity begin? Are you living in eternity now? Yet you do possess the gift, you are simply not realizing life in eternity yet. You are, however, alive spiritually, which was not the case prior to faith, for you were dead in trespasses and sin.

Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air...

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

This salvation is complete.--completely done for us by Jesus' work on the Cross. He said, It is finished! The debt has been paid.

*But has that spiritual birth affected the other two parts of our being? The soul and the body? Well, let's deal with the body first? Perhaps it can be a little more easily seen here. Is my body yet redeemed? Is yours? No! That is easy to see. What about the soul? How does the Bible treat the *salvation of the soul*?*

It is a Scriptural term, you know? In one of the several places wherein the term is used, you can find it in the Book of James:

James 1:21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Notice there is work involved here. Isn't that what it says? WHO is to do the work of putting aside **all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness? Who is to humbly receive the word which is implanted? And what would cause it to be implanted?** And if our own work is involved, then does it have anything to do with our free gift?

There are other places where we can see the term, but we will hold off on that for a moment.

If the free gift has to do with eternity future, and if **the Day of Rest**, the 7th day, the 7th thousand-year (also referred to as the millennial reign of Christ, **(refer to our timeline)**, **is still in TIME and space—future**, but not eternity future yet, then what does our spiritual birth have to do with the kingdom, and how does the thing that the Bible refers to as the salvation of the soul fit into the whole picture?

Our spiritual birth puts us into a place wherein we can fulfill God's created purpose for us...that to rule with Christ. Remember what we just read in Ephesians.

Ephesians 2: 4 But God, being rich in mercy... made us alive together with Christ ... 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

This is a **positional seating** at the moment. I am not raised up to the heavenlies, yet, and neither are you! In **the ages to come**, we all will be seated with Christ in the heavenlies. But there is something that lies between the present moment and eternity future. It is the age to come, and this age is the focus of Scripture. It is the 7th day! And the emphasis put on this future day is almost unfathomable! And **herein is yet another distinction that must be made if one is to understand even the most basic of all doctrine, the doctrine of salvation**. There must be a distinction made between the age to come, and eternity future.

So let's see how this information fits into the overall scope of salvation in Scripture.

We have already been saved.

Ephesians 2: 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

No works can be of ourselves in this. But, once that is in place, then the very next verse says:

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

What do these works have to do with? Certainly not the free gift, that is completely finished for us. These works have to do with things beyond the free gift. And that is what most of these 2067 pages in the Bible are all about. Though we have been saved, we are yet being saved. Look at these verses:

I Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

II Corinthians 2:15 For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing...

Note the distinctions between those who are being saved and those who are perishing. There could be more to say about the perishing part, but we'll just keep it to those who are being saved...

There is a distinction that must be made between the *free gift* of eternal life, and the *reward* of the inheritance. And the inheritance is connected with our work.

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. 25 For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

Remember, James said that we are to put aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness... This is a work to be done...

Paul says "WHATEVER you do, do you work heartily..."

Somehow our works must enter into the picture, don't they? And somehow our works have to do with an inheritance, don't they? That what it says, right?

So let's look into things connected to the reward of the inheritance, and see how it all fits together within the overall scope of Scripture.

- Let's look at the term we have used here for this annual conference: **THE WORD OF THE KINGDOM**

Where do we get that term, and how is it used?

I will be reading a long passage, for you to see the specific context this term falls into, but we shall not (we cannot) forget the context of the overall scope of Scripture. We will see how (and why) Jesus began to teach in parables.

The intention of teaching in parables is to reveal more and more truth to people who will have ears to hear, so that they can gain more and more insight into truth; and, in a real sense, to prevent people from hearing truth *if they do not have ears to hear*, so that they will not be held more accountable. (God is so merciful.)

The first parable laid out in Matthew chapter thirteen is the parable of the sower. After this parable Jesus gives six other parables, six other truths laid along side the first. Each parable has the same subject matter in focus, as we shall see. (For you information, a parable is a truth cast along side of another truth, with the intention of giving the hearer more understanding of the truth.)

Matthew 13:1 On that day Jesus went out of the house, and was sitting by the sea. 2 And great multitudes gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole multitude was standing on the beach. 3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying,

"Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil.

6 But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. 8 And others fell on the good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him hear."

There you have the parable--a simple illustration using the picture of a sower (one who sows seed) casting seed *for the purpose of the seed bearing fruit*. The parable depicts four different types of soil wherein fruit was expected, and the outcome of fruitbearing or lack thereof in each type of soil. What does the parable mean? Do you know that we do not have to guess at the meaning? As God often does, He gives His own commentary on His own Word.

10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 And He answered and said to them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it has not been granted.

So we can see that the intent of the teaching here has to do with the Kingdom of the heavens.

13 Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,

'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; 15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM.

16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. 17 "For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

This is a prophecy fulfilled which Isaiah spoke concerning *the spiritual condition of God's people* at the first coming of Christ. The very people who should be seeing these things, and hearing these things and understanding these things concerning the subject matter of the message that Jesus brought to His people...these are the ones, who for the most part, did not see and hear and understand. And the reason was because **their heart had become dull**. (Isn't that what it says?)

On the side, let me ask you something. Have you ever felt Christians have some sort of a condescending attitude toward the parables? Kind of like..."You cannot draw doctrine from parables..." There is given such a sense of DANGER, it seems when it comes to parables.

Is this the attitude that Jesus Himself portrays, as He is speaking these things to God's people?

What was the message that Jesus brought? What was the subject matter of this, as well as the other parables Jesus used to teach His people who *would* understand. Keep reading:

18 "Hear then the parable of the sower. 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. 20 And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 23 And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

It is relatively easy to see that this parable is *not dealing with the free gift of eternal life*. First of all, it specifically states that the parable is about the Word of the kingdom. The kingdom refers to the thousand year reign of Christ...a period falling in time and space, not in eternity!

It is also easy to see that this parable dealing with the kingdom is dealing with fruit-bearing, which is the very purpose seed is given to be cast about...for the purpose of bearing fruit. The parable deals with varying groups of people who could receive the message about fruit bearing, but for a variety of reasons, they shun the message, and as a result don't bear fruit...save one group.

Let's make something clear here—Has God ever expected pagans to bear fruit? OT or NT, has He ever expected pagans to bear spiritual fruit? How can they, they are dead spiritually, and therefore could never bear spiritual fruit!

Seeing that this is not dealing with salvation in the sense of the free gift with respect to eternal life, but rather with fruit-bearing, which is a result of one's own works, with a view to the kingdom age, this in itself should clear up some things concerning salvation. The free gift (REFERRED TO IN Scripture as 'salvation') is based upon faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. None of our works can enter into this in any way, shape or form. But this parable has to do with works, with our *doing something*. Entering into the kingdom, or inheriting the kingdom (also referred to in Scripture as "salvation") is something, which requires our own works, born out of faithfulness. 9And, where does faith come from? From the 2067 pages in this Book!

This term "Word of the Kingdom" deals with salvation with respect to the coming age, not salvation with respect to eternity. This distinction is made clearly throughout Scripture, and is easy to see, if one, who has come into possession of the free gift, through faith in Christ's finished work, and this one has ears to hear and eyes to see the "mysteries of the kingdom" of the heavens.

Actually, in order to get a lot of these things straight, there needs to be understanding concerning the differences between.

- **the free gift related to eternity, is based upon Jesus' finished work, and**
- **the inheritance in the kingdom related to the Coming Age is based upon our finished work, brought about through our works which emanate out of faith!**

...the work which was prepared for us to do from before the foundations of the World! (Man! It all fits together!)

Much of this is so connected to understanding the differences between these things, that if one begins to grasp these distinctions and differences, then quite a lot of heretofore misunderstanding will naturally fall into place. Let's look at this a little more closely to see how it fits into the overall scope of Scripture with respect to SALVATION.

Here is another term that needs to be understood: **INHERITANCE IN THE KINGDOM**

Let's recognized that the kingdom is an inheritance. The kingdom is not the free gift! Eternal life is the free gift. Meaning eternal life, or life into eternity, is freely given to us. We can do nothing to earn it. It is based upon something that Jesus did. It is based upon His finished work on Calvary. It is based upon His death, and His death alone. And putting faith in this finished work is what gives us the free gift. (Please forgive my repetition here.)

But the inheritance is something totally different than the free gift. First of all, the free gift is given to someone who is not in the family, but who comes into the family through faith. The inheritance is offered only to those who are in the family. And according to Scripture is given as a reward for work whole heartily done.

We have already seen what Paul said:

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. 25 For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

We do not have to surmise that the kingdom is an inheritance, we can see it plainly stated in Scripture. This is only one of many places we could go to in order to see that the *inheritance is a reward for work well done*. Look at what Jesus Himself says:

Matthew 25:31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'

You see, the inheritance is given to those who DID something. A Work, which God had called these to do. In fact, a work, which God prepared from before the foundation of the world...a truly awesome thought.

Scripture teaches that the kingdom will last an age (singular). A one-thousand year period. It is referred to as "the Day of the Lord", which Peter tells us that "a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as a day." And this statement, found in II Peter chapter two, falls within the context of Peter dealing with the "promise of His coming."

So let's next look at these English words: **THE WORDS-- "ETERNAL" AND "ETERNITY"**

But in order to see these distinctions, we must realize some things about the the Hebrew and Greek languages. Neither the Hebrew language (OT) nor the Greek language (NT) has a word comparable to the English noun *eternity*, nor the English adjective *eternal*. (Speak to this from the Appendix article)

The kingdom of the heavens, per se, is not an eternal kingdom. The term is not referring to eternity, although there certainly is a sense in which Christ's kingdom will be an eternal one. But technically speaking, the term "the kingdom of the heavens" solely refers to the time when Jesus will sit upon His throne in the heavens above the present earth, and will rule from the heavens, which surround the earth for one age, for one thousand years. *This is during time and space, not in eternity future.*

(Show the timeline again.)

At the end of that coming age, Jesus will offer up His kingdom to the Father, and His throne and the throne of the Father will become one Throne (I Cor. 15:23 ff). Many things will happen at the end of the coming age (singular), and one of the things which will happen then is the putting away of the present earth and the heavens which

surround the earth, and the bringing forth of a new heavens and a new earth, which does not presently exist, but which will exist after time, as we know it, ends and eternity begins.

Then and only then, will eternity begin, and will the Throne of the Lamb and the Throne of the Father will become one Throne, and God, along with all of His saved people rule over all the universe for all of eternity.

The distinctions must be made! The Coming Age, has to do with the thousand year reign of Christ over the earth, and the eternal ages (plural) wherein the Godhead will rule (once again) over a universe wherein there is no rebellion, no rebel ruler in any part of the universe...as there is presently in the heavens over the earth.

So what about this distinction between the Coming Age (singular) and eternal ages, (plural)? One is attained through faith apart from works, and the other is attained through faith, and works emanating out of faith!

It can be difficult to see the distinctions of the coming age (singular) from the ages to come (plural). But possibly the best example to see this distinction is a story that is told in the Gospel of Mark. Let's read it:

Mark 10:17 And as He [Jesus] was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and began asking Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal (grk. Aionias) life?"

The Greek word used here which has been translated into the English adjective *eternal* is the word *aionias*. It comes from the Greek noun *aion*.

We should answer a couple of questions here. What is the man asking about here?

- First of all, the man is asking about *the inheritance*. We all know that inheritance is a family term. One must be in a family in order to be in line to receive an inheritance.
- Secondly, the man is asking *what he must DO*. What kind of work needs to be done in order to receive life connected to an inheritance?
- Is he asking about life in eternity, which is based upon a free gift, or is he asking about life in the coming age (an inheritance), which is offered only to people who are already part of the family through having already received the free gift? The reception of the inheritance is through bearing fruit with respect to the kingdom.

Back to the man asking about what he needs to do in order to receive this inheritance in the age to come:

...19 "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'"

20 And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up."

21 And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

22 But at these words his face fell, and he went away grieved, for he was one who owned much property. **23** And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"

You see what Jesus related the man's question to? The man asked about what was necessary TO DO in order to INHERIT life in the age to come. (It is singular in the Greek.) Jesus told him what he needed to do. This was at a time when the Jews were still bound to keep the Law. Please understand that the Law was never given to be the means by which anyone was ever saved. In the Book of Exodus, the Law was given to a redeemed nation, a nation who had been redeemed by faith in what God said about the blood of the paschal lambs, a nation that was redeemed out of bondage by death and shed blood of an innocent lamb. For us, it would be equivalent to the necessity of our keeping the commands of Christ.

Actually the Law was given as a standard by which this redeemed nation (Israel) was to live in order to receive their inheritance in the theocratic kingdom in the land promised to their forefathers. The Law was never a means of salvation. Because, salvation (the free gift) is never attained to by any work on the part of an unsaved person, which would be an impossibility, as the Law could have nothing to do with redemption out of bondage.

But we see here in this story, a man asking Jesus WHAT MUST HE DO TO INHERIT his inheritance in what the translators have translated as eternal life. But is the inheritance connected to life in eternity? And is the man asking Jesus what is necessary to receive the free gift of eternal life, or the inheritance of the kingdom?

Look at the detail. It is easy to see that the man was asking what he needed to do in order to gain his inheritance. Since we know that inheritance is a family term it is necessary to understand that the man is a member of the family wherein he stands poised to inherit something as a family member. But the man understands that there is something that family members must do in order to gain the inheritance. So Jesus answers the question, based upon OT Law.

Jesus said, that first he must keep the law. And though he admitted he had done so, Jesus told him he lack one thing...

Just like in the parable, the seed had fallen on thorny ground, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of wealth choked out the good works necessary to allow him to produce the necessary fruit. Riches had clouded his thinking and therefore had and as a result, he was not willing to do what he needed to do in order to receive the inheritance in what the translators call eternal life.

Again, the question is: Is the inheritance of the kingdom in eternity future, or in the coming age? The remainder of the story gives the answer. But first look at the reaction of the disciples upon hearing and seeing this transpire:

24 And the disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter 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 the kingdom of God." 26 And they were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?"

These disciples understood what had just taken place. They understood that there is a salvation ("Then who can be saved?") connected to a family inheritance, which has to do with entering the kingdom and which is gained through works.

Do you see that?

27 Looking upon them, Jesus said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God." 28 Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You."

(This is something that we will deal with in the third talk of this series, which will be Saturday afternoon.) Peter was getting the picture. Peter, a saved individual by this point, was saying, “hey, we have given up everything....”

29 Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, 30 but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions;

Back to our parable, the Word of the Kingdom will bring persecutions in the present age; and while there seems much necessary to be given up, according to this teaching by Jesus, there is MUCH to gain—here and now—and also Jesus goes on to say:

and in the age (aion) to come, eternal (aionios) life.

Both, the Greek noun and the Greek adjective made from the noun are used together in this passage. If the noun is singular, and it is, would not the related adjective be singular as well? It would be like saying: “And in the AGE to come, ages of life.” No, that sounds silly. But that is what the translators have done when translating into the English. Literally, it should read:

Or, and in the age to come, age-lasting life, or life for the age. If the noun is singular, then the adjective made from and connected to the noun should also be singular. If the noun was plural, then the adjective made from and connected to the noun would also have to be plural.

But having seen that, let’s get back to finish up our peek at the parables. With the first parable being laid out in quite a bit of detail, Jesus clearly explains that the seed sown is THE WORD OF THE KINGDOM. (Notice our conference title. This has been the conference title for three years now. And as long as we remain here on earth, I am guessing the title will not change, only the year will change. The reason? Because this is a conference for saved people to understand more and more fully WHY they have been created and WHY they have been redeemed, and WHAT is our ahead of them if they but hold fast to what they have.

To see that the subject matter in all the parables in Matthew chapter thirteen is the same—the kingdom of the heavens in the age to come and not the free gift in eternity future—is easy to see. Just notice the beginning of each::

Matt 13:24 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to...

Matt 13:31 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like...

Matt 13:33 He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like...

Matt 13:34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable, 35 so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world."

Matt 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like...

Matt 13:45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like...

Matt 13:47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like..."

Finally at the end, Jesus asks His disciples:

Matt 13:51 "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes." 52 And He said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old."

Talk about that passage.

"THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS" and "THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

Briefly let's consider the meaning of the term "the kingdom of the heavens". What does it mean exactly? It means exactly what it says: it is the rule from the heavens, and for the coming age, it deals with rulership only over the earth. In eternity future, this rulership will extend over the entire universe, **but for the thousand-year reign of Christ, the reign will be relegated to the earth and the earth alone. And this rule will emanate from the heavens. (Something that Nebuchanezzar had to learn in Daniel chapter four, was**

Dan 4:26b...that it is Heaven that rules.

Then the question: Is the kingdom of the heavens the same thing as the kingdom of God, or are these two separate things?

The phrase "kingdom of heaven" (or "the kingdom of the heavens") is used 32 times in the Gospel of Matthew. The phrase "kingdom of God" is used 3 times in Matthew,

The phrase "kingdom of the heavens" is never used in any book other than the Gospel of Matthew. This was uniquely used in the Book of Matthew. Rather, the term "kingdom of God" is used in the other three gospels for a total of 49 times and an additional, 17 times in the remainder of the NT.

Often people ask if there is a difference between these two terms. The answer: No, not from a Scriptural perspective. It can be seen that the term "kingdom of God" that refer to *the overall universal kingdom of God*, but in my study for this conference, I specifically looked to see where those uses are, I in the NT, I could not find one such use.

Then I looked to see if the term is used in the OT, and it is not. This was surprising to me. Now, there is no question that God is the Sovereign over the whole universe, being the Creator and the only One Who has existed forever, with no beginning and no end. No one is above Him. No one supercedes Him. This universe belongs to Him, and is ruled by Him and Him alone.

But this Book (in most of the 2067 pages) deals with *a specific realm of His universal creation*; it deals with the portion of His creation that is ruled over by a rebel ruler right now, but is going to be taken over by the Son of God, the Son of Man, and faithful family members in an age to come, and will be such for 1,000 years

This Book is about that. In the beginning it was about that, in the middle it is about that, and at the end it is about that. So frankly it should be so surprise that the uses of both terms in the Bible is connected with this coming age.

Without spending too much time on comparing the uses of these terms in the Gospels, we'll look at three different comparisons. You could do more comparisons with a good concordance.

First we'll look in Matthew, at the Sermon on the Mount, in chapter five. Jesus says:

Matthew 5:1 ...His disciples came to Him. 2 And opening His mouth He began to teach them, saying, 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

And we can immediately turn to the Gospel of Luke, to see that Luke in the exact same scenario, does not use the term "kingdom of heaven" but rather "kingdom of God"

Luke 6: 20 And turning His gaze on His disciples, He began to say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

Another comparison that makes this easy to see is something we have already looked at in Matthew chapter thirteen. In beginning to teach in parables, and the disciples asking why He was doing so, you remember that Jesus:

Matthew 13:11 ...answered and said to them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted."

And in the exact same scenario, Mark writes in his gospel:

Mark 4:11 And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables,"

And finally in Matthew's rendition of the rich young ruler asking Jesus what it takes to receive his inheritance in the coming age, Matthew records Jesus using both terms interchangeably. Let's read what he says:

Matt 19:23 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, 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."

In summary, it is very important to see particular distinctions within the overall scope of Scripture, in order to understand correctly, even the most basic of all doctrines, the doctrine of Salvation. We must see that:

Saturday, we will be discussing the distinctions between justification, sanctification and glorification, and how this should effect a transformation within each of us. Let's close in prayer!