

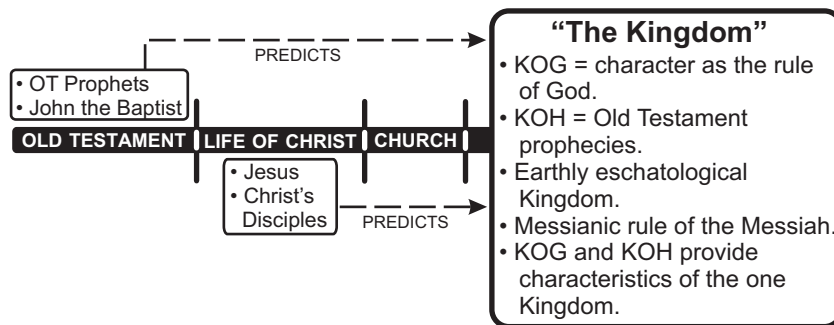
# KINGDOM OF GOD, KINGDOM OF HEAVEN — SAME OR DIFFERENT?

Do the two expressions, “Kingdom of God” (KOG) and “Kingdom of Heaven” (KOH) have the same or different meanings in Scripture? This issue of whether a distinction exists between the terms is not dispensationally based. One may hold to either position, and may or may not be a dispensationist. Jesus restricted proclaiming the Kingdom to Jews (Mt.10:5-6). This would seem unnecessary if the kingdom is merely spiritual. The spiritual kingdom sense has always been recognized among the people of God (Ps.37:31; 103:19). But this spiritual sense alone does not adequately describe the kingdom. Along this line, the Old Testament eschatological Kingdom depends on the Jews receiving it. However, in Jesus’ day this kingdom cannot be the church because the church had not yet been revealed nor established (Mt.16:18). Also, the kingdom is not God’s universal reign over the hearts of man since that has existed since creation.

## SAME (SINGLE) KINGDOM VIEW

### Description / Arguments:

- The kingdom that John, Jesus (Mt.4:17), and His disciples (Mt.10:7) announced and offered the Jews was exactly the same earthly eschatological Kingdom the Old Testament prophets predicted over which the Messiah would rule.
- Matthew’s use of “the kingdom of heaven” may be explained as a Semitic idiom based on their reverence for the name of God. Their tendency was to use “heaven” or “heavens” as a substitute.
- If they intended the phrases to be understood as distinct they would have explained them. That they did not announce a difference indicates they referred to a Kingdom known to their hearers.
- Christ’s disciples expected the start of an earthly Kingdom (Mt.20:20-21; Ac.1:6). They expected this even after hearing Jesus’ teaching about the Kingdom for some time.
- Matthew used the term KOG to stress the character of the Kingdom as the rule of God (Mt.12:28). He used the term KOH to emphasize the Old Testament prophecies about the Kingdom. The same Kingdom is in view.



## DIFFERENT (DISTINCT) KINGDOM VIEW

### Description / Arguments:

- The two expressions are often used synonymously, yet are clearly distinct in some contexts.
- Matthew uses both terms in his gospel to indicate a distinction is meant to be understood. It may be that Matthew used the term KOH because he writes to a Jewish audience. He wanted to connect with Daniel’s use of the phrase (Da.2:44; 4:26, 37; 7:27).
- The terms seem to overlap where John the Baptist announces the nearness of the KOG (Mt.12:28; Mk.1:14-15; Lk.10:9). All that is necessary for the Kingdom to start is Israel’s acceptance of her King (Mt.11:14). The Kingdom was near because the King was near.

KINGDOM OF GOD	KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KOG is the sphere of inward reality, made up of those who truly believe on Christ.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KOH is the sphere of outward profession (including both genuine and merely professing believers).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KOG is cosmic and universal in its dimensions, with authority over all creation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KOH is limited to the earth. Its dimensions are physical and outward.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KOG refers to God’s internal rule over believers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KOH refers to God’s earthly rule.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The KOG is God’s rule in the universe and in the hearts of His people (Ps.103:19).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The KOH is God’s rule of heaven over the earth by Christ when He establishes His Kingdom on earth.</li> </ul>

SUMMARY

The Single Kingdom view understands the terms to be synonymous, and refer to the same Kingdom entity. The Distinct Kingdom view see the terms referring to two different entities. Both positions above are held by Dispensationists. The two positions are compatible with a Pre-Millennial and Pre-Tribulational view. Both positions state truths that may be accepted by either side. However, based on the evidence or arguments provided above, we favor the Distinct Kingdom view. God says what He means, and means what He says.

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