

Eternal Life / the Kingdom of God / Heaven

Salvation & eternal life is different from entering the kingdom & being a disciple
The kingdom of God and heaven are not the same

A study by Vik Fomenko (March 2023)

The terms “Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom of Heaven” refer to the same thing

Jesus, while referring to the same Kingdom, sometimes referred to it as “Kingdom of Heaven” and other times as “Kingdom of God

Matthew 19:23-24 NASB

23 And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it will be hard for a rich person 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 person to enter the kingdom of God.”

Parallel passages that use both terms are talking about the exact same thing:

(1)

Matthew 4:17 NASB

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Mark 1:14-15 NASB

Now after John was taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

(2)

Matthew 8:11 NASB

And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven

Luke 13:28-29 NASB

28 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. 29 And they will come from east and west, and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God.

(3)

Matthew 13:10-11 NASB

10 And the disciples came up and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

11 And Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

Mark 4:10-11 NASB

10 As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve disciples, began asking Him about the parables. 11 And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but for those who are outside, everything comes in parables

Luke 8:9-10 NASB

9 Now His disciples began asking Him what this parable meant. 10 And He said, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest they are told in parables...

The Kingdom of God is NOT the same as Heaven

The kingdom of God is more than heaven

Heaven is a place; the dwelling place of God

The kingdom of God is not a place but a spiritual reality; it is wherever King Jesus rules & reigns

The kingdom is the rule of God through Jesus Christ

It is the rule of God in the hearts of believers

Wherever Jesus is reigning, the kingdom is manifesting

Wherever people are living in obedience to Jesus, the kingdom is there

Heaven is never said to be in us or around us

The kingdom of God can be within us / around us

Luke 17:20-21 NIV

20 Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, 21 nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.”

Luke 17:21

the kingdom of God is within you. (NKJV, KJV, YLT, AMP, ASV)

the kingdom of God is in your midst. (NASB, CSB, NIV, NET)

the kingdom of God is among you. (AMP, NLT, ISV, CEB)

The kingdom of God “within you” or “in your midst” is only in the person & presence of Jesus

Jesus mentions His miracles as proof of the kingdom (Luke 11:20)

Luke 11:20 NASB

But if I cast out the demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matthew 23:13 NASB

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut the kingdom of heaven in front of people; for you do not enter it yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

Luke 11:52 NLT

What sorrow awaits you experts in religious law! For you remove the key to knowledge from the people. You don't enter the Kingdom yourselves, and you prevent others from entering.

Colossians 1:13 NASB

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and **transferred** us to the **kingdom** of His beloved Son

Luke 12:31-32 NIV

But **seek his kingdom**, and these things will be given to you as well. 32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been **pleased to give you the kingdom**.

Matthew 6:33 NASB

But **seek** first **His kingdom** and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you.

Romans 14:17 NASB

for the **kingdom of God** is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness** and **peace** and **joy** in the Holy Spirit.

Luke 16:16 NLT

Until John the Baptist, the law of Moses and the messages of the prophets were your guides. But now the Good News of the **Kingdom of God** is preached, and **everyone is eager to get in**.

Requirements to Enter the Kingdom of God

1. Born again, saved (John 3:3-5)
2. Do the will of God (Matthew 7:21-23)
3. Be a disciple, follower of Jesus (Luke 9:57-62)
4. Live righteous, free from sin (Mark 9:43-47; Matt 18:6-9, 5:20, 21:31-32; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Eph 5:5; Gal 5:19-21)
5. Be like a child (Matt 18:3-4, 19:14; Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17)
6. Enter the narrow way (Luke 13:23-30; Matthew 7:13-14, 21)
7. Go through hardships & persecution (Mark 10:24; Acts 14:22; Matt 3:10, 20:20-21; 2 Thess 1:5; John 15:20)
8. Produce fruit (Matthew 21:43)
9. Be poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3)
10. Love God and people (James 2:5; Matthew 25:34-39)
11. Not with our physical bodies (1 Corinthians 15:50)

1. Born again / saved

John 3:3-5 NASB

3 Jesus responded and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is **born again** he **cannot see the kingdom** of God."

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is **born of water and the Spirit**, he **cannot enter the kingdom** of God.

2. Do the will of God

Matthew 7:21-23 NASB

21 Not everyone who **says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom** of heaven, but the one **who does the will** of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; leave Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

3. Be a disciple / follower of Jesus

- Not just a believer, but a follower of Jesus who is surrendered to Him

Luke 9:57-62 NASB

59 And He said to another, "**Follow Me**."

61 Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say goodbye to those at my home."

62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and **looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.**"

4. Live righteous / free from sin

Mark 9:43-47 NASB (see similar in Matt 18:6-9)

42 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it is better for him if a heavy millstone is hung around his neck and he is thrown into the sea.

43 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire. 45 And if your foot is causing you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life without a foot, than, having your two feet, to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye is causing you to sin, throw it away; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be thrown into hell

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NASB

9 Or do you not know that the **unrighteous** will not **inherit the kingdom of God**? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor those habitually drunk, nor verbal abusers, nor swindlers, will **inherit the kingdom of God**. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Ephesians 5:5 NASB

For this you know with certainty, that no sexually immoral or impure or greedy person, which amounts to an idolater, has an **inheritance** in the **kingdom of Christ and God**.

Galatians 5:19-21 NASB

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, indecent behavior, 20 idolatry, witchcraft, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who **practice** such things will **not inherit the kingdom of God**.

Matthew 5:20 NASB

For I say to you that unless your **righteousness far surpasses** that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not **enter the kingdom of heaven**.

Matt 21:31-32 NASB

...Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes **will get into the kingdom of God before you**. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even have second thoughts afterward so as to believe him.

5. Be like a child

Matthew 18:3-4 NASB

and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you change and **become like children**, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 So whoever will humble himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 19:14 NASB

But Jesus said, "Leave the **children** alone, and do not forbid them to come to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Mark 10:15 NASB (Luke 18:17)

Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.

6. Enter the narrow way

Luke 13:23-30 NASB

23 And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, 24 "**Strive to enter** through the **narrow door**; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin standing outside and knocking on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' and He then will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' 26 Then you will begin saying, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets!' 27 And yet He will say, 'I do not know where you are from; leave Me, all you evildoers.' 28 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. 29 And they will come from east and west, and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

Matthew 7:13-23 ESV

13 Enter by the **narrow gate**. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

21 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven...

The narrow gate conversation was in the context of the kingdom of heaven

Matthew 7:13 NLT

You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate.

7. Go through hardships & persecution

Mark 10:24 NLT

This amazed them. But Jesus said again, “Dear children, it is **very hard to enter the Kingdom of God.**

Acts 14:22 NIV

strengthening the **disciples** and encouraging them to **remain true** to the faith. “We must go **through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,**” they said.

The disciples needed to be strengthened and encouraged to remain in the faith and go through hardships

Matthew 3:10

Blessed are those who have been **persecuted** for the sake of righteousness, for **theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

2 Thessalonians 1:5 NLT

And God will use this **persecution** to show his justice and to **make you worthy of his Kingdom,** for which you are **suffering.**

John 15:20 NASB

Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, **they will persecute you as well**

Matthew 20:20-21 NASB

20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. 21 And He said to her, “What do you desire?” She said to Him, “Say that **in Your kingdom** these two sons of mine shall sit, one at Your right, and one at Your left.”

22 But Jesus replied, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to **drink the cup** that I am about to drink?” They said to Him, “We are able.”

8. Produce fruit

Matthew 21:43 NASB

Therefore I say to you, the **kingdom of God** will be **taken away** from you and given to a people **producing its fruit.**

9. Be poor in spirit

Matthew 5:3

Blessed are the **poor in spirit,** for **theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

10. Love God and people

James 2:5 NIV

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to **inherit the kingdom** he promised **those who love him?**

Matthew 25:34-39

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 something to 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.' 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38 And when did we see You as a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine, you did it for Me.'

11. Not with our physical bodies

1 Corinthians 15:50 NLT

What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our **physical bodies** cannot **inherit** the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.

The Kingdom of God is both a present and future reality

The kingdom of God refers to the reign of God now

It also refers to the millennial reign of Christ after the first resurrection

Scripture makes a distinction between the kingdom of God on earth today and the future eternal kingdom of God

Matthew 20:20-21 NASB

20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. 21 And He said to her, "What do you desire?" She said to Him, "Say that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine shall sit, one at Your right, and one at Your left."

22 But Jesus replied, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able."

23 He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit at My right and at My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

2 Peter 1:10-11 NIV

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, 11 and you **will receive** a rich **welcome** into the **eternal kingdom** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Eternal life is NOT the same as entering the Kingdom

Eternal life is obtained only by faith / by believing

Never once does the Bible say that the kingdom of God is received by faith

Entering the Kingdom requires works

Jesus makes a distinction between eternal life and entering the kingdom of heaven/God

- Eternal life was about believing in Jesus
- The Kingdom was about laying down everything and following Jesus

Rich Young Ruler

Matthew 19:16-30 NASB (Also Mark 10:17-31)

16 And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do so that I may obtain **eternal life**?"

17 ...but if you want to enter life, keep the commandments.

21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, **follow Me**."

23 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it will be hard for a rich person 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 person to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?"

27 Then Peter responded and said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and **followed** You; what then will there be for us?" 28 And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have **followed Me**, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms on account of My name, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.

Jesus invited the rich young ruler not just to eternal life, but to following Him

- Jesus said it was not "complete" to just have eternal life, but that there was something more... the more was to follow Him and make Him Lord, not just savior

- Those who follow Jesus are distinguished in eternity from those who just have eternal life

Salvation / Eternal Life / Being Born Again

Salvation is by faith alone

John 3:16 NASB

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have **eternal life**.

John 6:47 NASB

Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who believes has **eternal life**.

John 5:24 NASB

Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 6:27, 29 NLT

27 ...Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you.

29 Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: **Believe** in the one he has sent."

Acts 16:30-31 NASB

30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Romans 10:9-10 NASB

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Galatians 3:24, 26 NASB

24 Therefore the Law has become our guardian to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

26 For you are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 1:13 NASB

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of the promise

Not by works

Titus 3:5 NASB

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Romans 3:20, 27-28 NASB

20 because by the works of the Law none of mankind will be justified in His sight...

27 Where then is boasting? It has been excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

28 For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Romans 4:5 NASB

But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness

Galatians 2:16 NIV

know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Romans 11:6 NASB

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, since otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Philippians 3:9 NASB

and may be found in Him, **not** having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith

Eternal Life

Eternal life is the promise for everyone who is saved

- Everyone who is saved has eternal life
- Not everyone who has eternal life will enter the kingdom of God!

Romans 6:23 ESV

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 3:16 NASB

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3:36 NASB

The one who believes in the Son has eternal life; but the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

John 5:24 NASB

Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 6:27, 29 NLT

27 ...Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you.

29 Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."

John 6:47 NASB

Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who believes has eternal life.

John 17:2-3

...so that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Matthew 18:8-9 NLT

8 So if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It's better to enter eternal life with only one hand or one foot than to be thrown into eternal fire with both of your hands and feet. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It's better to enter eternal life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

Born Again

John 3:3-7 NASB

3 Jesus responded and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

- The prerequisite for entering the Kingdom of God is being born again (aka saved / eternal life)
- Being born again is the entrance into salvation; the first step of salvation
- Salvation is first, after that we are invited to enter the Kingdom of God by making Him Lord, not just savior; being laying down our life and being His disciple

1 Peter 1:3-23 NASB

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you

9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

22 Since you have purified your souls in obedience to the truth

23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable

Difference between Salvation and being Born Again?

Salvation is referred to in Scripture as involving three parts – past, present, and future

1 **Past** - we were saved from our sin and guilt in the past (Luke 7:50; Eph. 2:5, 8)

2 **Present** - we are being saved from this present evil world and its corruption (1 Cor 1:18)

3 **Future** - we will be saved from wrath on the Day of Judgment (Rom 5:9), will get glorified bodies (Phil 3:21, 1 Cor 15:42-44), and inherit the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2-3)

Born again is a very specific and refers to the first things that happens when we are saved

First will be last; and the last, first

Speaks to the idea that there will be 2 different entrances into eternal life:

(1) First resurrection - for the bride – for the honeymoon, millennial reign, New Jerusalem

(2) Second resurrection - for everyone else (unto the great white throne judgement)

Revelation 20:4-5 NLT

4 Then I saw thrones, and the people sitting on them had been given the authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus and for proclaiming the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They all came to life again, and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

5 This is the first resurrection. (The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended.)

Matthew 19:30 - But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

Matthew 20:16 - So the last shall be first, and the first, last.

Luke 13:30 - And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.

Mark 10:31 - But many who are first will be last, and the last, first.

Helpful Resources:

<http://www.wor.org/book/3131/heaven-or-the-kingdom-of-god>