

# THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

## Part one: The Kingdom Sermons

"This gospel of the Kingdom shall be  
preached in the whole world for a witness  
to all the nations..." Matthew 24:14

### A STUDY GUIDE

For Group or Individual Bible Study

## This Gospel of the Kingdom Study Guide

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART ONE: THE KINGDOM SERMONS

### FORWORD

#### 1. THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

INTRODUCTION	7
I.    THE KINGDOM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	9
II.   THE PROPHETIC KINGDOM	10
III.  JESUS AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN	13

#### 2. KINGDOM CITIZENSHIP

I.    KINGDOM CIVICS 101	17
II.   JESUS' KINGDOM SERMONS	18
III.  THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT	20
IV.   THE BEATITUDES	23
V.    THE MISSION OF THE KINGDOM CITIZEN	31
VI.   THE KINGDOM LIFESTYLE	36
VII.  THE PROOF OF KINGDOM CITIZENSHIP	58
VIII. THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN	65
IX.   INSTRUCTION ON PRAYER (LUKE 11:1-13)	67

CONCLUSION	69
------------	----

NOTE	71
------	----

# THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM STUDY GUIDE

## PART TWO: THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

FORWARD	73
The Mission of the Parable	
I. THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM	79
Introduction	
Why Parables?	
Jesus Authenticates His Ministry To The Nation By His Miracles	
II. THE KEY PARABLE: “THE SOWER AND THE SOILS”	91
The Sower	
The Seed	
The Soils	
III. “THE WHEAT AND TARES”	97
IV. “THE GROWING SEED”	100
V. “THE MUSTARD SEED	102
The Seed	
The Branches	
The Birds	
VI. “THE LEAVEN”	107
VII. “THE HIDDEN TREASURE” AND “THE PEARL”	110
VIII. “THE DRAGNET”	113
1. The Net	
2. The Sea	
3. The Fishermen	
4. The Fish	
5. The Angels	
IX. “THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT”	119
Forgiveness In The Kingdom Of Heaven	
The Astronomical Debt	
God’s Grace And Mercy Is The Only Way	
The Proof Of Kingdom Citizenship	

X. “THE PARABLE OF THE LANDOWNER”	123
XI. THE PARABLE “THE MARRIAGE FEAST”	128
XII. THE PARABLE OF “THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS”	133
XIII. THE PARABLE OF “THE TALENTS”	136
XIV. A FINAL WARNING: THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS	140
1. The Son of Man will return in glory.	
2. The Son of Man never left us.	
3. The Son of Man will judge all people.	
XV. CONCLUSION	145
APPENDIX A	
THE PARABLES OF JESUS	147

## FOREWORD

*"According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident: for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work." 1 Corinthians 3:10-13*

The church at Corinth had taken a wrong turn. Paul, a servant of Christ, had planted the church at Corinth. Another servant/leader named Apollos had come to the church and continued to build upon the foundation Paul started building. Leaders in the Corinthian church began to look to Paul and Apollos instead of Jesus, the foundation that no man can lay. Once that happened, factions developed in the church and men began to quarrel over which one had the right of leadership in the church. As soon as the believers in Corinth started listening to the doctrines of men – good and faithful as those men might have been – for direction instead of the Word of God they resorted to a pattern of behavior not unlike the nonbelievers around them. Believers in Christ are called to unity and fellowship. Quarreling and dividing exposed those believers in Corinth who lived as mere men and did not walk by the Spirit or adhere to the Word of God. Before they knew what was happening, they were striving against the spirit of the gospel and of Christ.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century church is in much the same condition today as the Corinthian church Paul addressed in his first

*"For no man  
can lay a  
foundation  
other than  
the one  
which is laid,  
which is  
Jesus  
Christ."  
1 Cor. 3:11*

letter. Many believers today have built their faith upon poor foundations using inferior materials of denominationalism, creeds, doctrines of men, and by following Christian celebrities or the latest trends. As a result, we see the same quarrelling and divisions in the church as a whole that at one time characterized the church at Corinth. In fact, false teachers and outright enemies of the gospel, taking advantage of this confusion and contention amongst believers, have slipped into the ranks of the church and are offering counterfeit gospels, misleading many away from an authentic Christianity. The remedy for the church today is the same as it was in Paul's day: a return a genuine biblical faith built solely upon the person of Jesus Christ and His teachings.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul exhorts believers to, "test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves... to see if indeed Christ is in you" (2 Corinthians 13:5). How then, do we know if all or only some of what we believe is authentic Christianity? What are the tests we can use to examine not only ourselves, but also what we believe to be a true, biblical faith in Christ Jesus?

If you were to choose ten Christians at random out of a crowd, and ask them, "What is a true Christian?" you will, most likely, get ten different answers. However, if you were to go directly to the word of God to seek out the answer to that question, you must arrive at a single answer. By going to the source – the original – it is possible to discover with a high degree of certainty what is true. That is how, for example, the experts are able determine a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill from a real twenty-dollar bill. By studying the original, and knowing

*"Test  
yourselves to  
see if you are in  
the faith;  
examine  
yourselves!  
  
Or do you not  
recognize this  
about  
yourselves, that  
Jesus Christ is  
in you – unless  
indeed you fail  
the test?"*

*2 Cor. 13:5*

fully what the original looks like, they are able to compare and test all other bills against the one they know to be authentic. Sometimes a bill is so close to the original that the untrained eye is unable to detect the counterfeit. Then it will take the specially trained eye of an expert, using extraordinary methods and tests, to expose the imitation. But once those skills are properly applied, the counterfeit will be exposed.

In the same way believers are admonished not to believe every spirit, "but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). As a matter of fact, believers are commanded to diligently study God's word so as not to be led away from the truth. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Christians should be motivated to earnestly study the Bible because "He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6), and because we demonstrate our love for Him by reading and obeying His word (John 14: 21, 23, 24). Born again believers have another great advantage in that they have the guidance of the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because he abides with you and will be in you" (John 14: 17). As a matter of fact, it can be said with confidence that without the Holy Spirit it is impossible to understand the Word of God because the Bible is a spiritual book and must be spiritually discerned. That is why men who do not have the Holy Spirit can read the Bible and come away unaffected: "For if anyone is a

*"Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."*

*1 Tim. 4:16*

hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was" (James 1:23, 24).

Finally, our study of God's word must be subject to sound principles of biblical hermeneutics. Generally speaking, hermeneutics is the science of interpretation and explanation; applied to biblical study, it is the methods or laws whereby the meaning of the Scriptures may be accurately interpreted. Biblical hermeneutics requires that we interpret the Scriptures in their proper context:

- In the **original language**
- In its **geographical setting**
- In the **time it was written**
- Using **Scripture to verify Scripture** (not using outside sources, personal experiences, or the opinions of men)

Therefore, if we are to know with certainty whether or not what we have been taught and what have come to believe, is true and genuine Christianity, we must return to the source – the original gospel revealed in the person and teachings of the author and finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ.

Let us now open our hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit of truth, and using sound methods of interpreting God's word, search out what the Bible defines as **authentic** Christianity.

**au • then • tic:**

1. **Worthy of acceptance or belief as conforming to, or based on, fact**
2. **Conforming to an original so as to reproduce essential features > as in an "authentic" reproduction of a colonial farmhouse**
3. **Not false, or imitation: real, actual, genuine, bona-fide; being actually and exactly what is claimed.**



Part One

The  
Kingdom  
Sermons

# 1. *The Gospel of the Kingdom*

*Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:14, 15 NKJV*

## INTRODUCTION

The gospel writers, Matthew and Mark, made it clear that Jesus began His public ministry with the pronouncement that God's "kingdom" was "at hand." As a matter of fact, a careful reading of each of the gospels will reveal that much of Jesus' teaching was focused upon this idea of the "kingdom of God."

**Read the following scriptures and write in the spaces provided what each one says about the kingdom of God:**

- Matt. 4:23: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Mark 4:11: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Luke 4:42-44: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- John 3:3, 5: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus taught that the kingdom is gospel – good news; it is a mystery to those who are on the outside, but is known to

*"From  
that time  
Jesus  
began to  
preach  
and say,  
"Repent,  
for the  
kingdom of  
heaven is at  
hand."  
Matt. 4:17*

His disciples. Jesus also taught that unless one was born again they could not see or enter into the kingdom of God.

The Gospels mention the **kingdom of heaven** or the **kingdom of God** some eighty-five times, and almost every time the terms are used, they are direct or indirect quotes from Jesus. Without question, the kingdom had a significant role in Jesus' teachings. However, the Jews had a difficult time understanding His teachings on the kingdom of God because they differed greatly from their *expectations* of the kingdom and the Messiah who would come to establish it. The Jews believed the messianic kingdom would be:

1. An earthly kingdom (John 6:15)
2. An exclusively Jewish kingdom (Mark 11: 10)
3. To be established at some vague, future date (Matt. 24:3)

**Read the following passages from the Gospels, and write in the spaces provided what Jesus taught about the kingdom of God:**

1. Luke 17:20, 21; John 8:23; John 18:36: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark13: 10; Luke 2:10; John 10:16; Acts 1:8: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Matt. 4:17; 10:7; 12:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 10: 8, 9; 12:32: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:**

The expression, "kingdom of heaven" is used thirty-two times in Matthew's Gospel. Although some scholars try to distinguish the term from the "kingdom of God" used in the other Gospels, their arguments are found to be weak when comparing uses of the terms by all of the Gospel writers. Since Matthew was writing primarily to a Jewish audience - and Jews held a great reverence for the name of the deity - he demonstrated his sensitivity to the Jews by substituting "heaven" for the name of God.

## I. THE KINGDOM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The concept of the **kingdom** of God was well established in the Jewish Scriptures before Jesus began His ministry. Although the phrase itself is never used by any of the Old Testament writers, a clear and distinct picture of "kingdom" emerges from the writings of Israel's prophets, priests and kings. Jesus reinforced the ideas that the kingdom of God is eternal, universal, and that the manifestation of the kingdom in all its fullness lies ahead on this earth. Yet what Jesus brought with Him was a deeper and fuller understanding of the *present reality* of the kingdom, and revealed to His disciples "keys" to unlock the mysteries and power of the kingdom of heaven; "for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them" (Luke 10:24).

**Read Luke 10:1-24. Highlight verses 9, 11b, & 19. For what purpose were the seventy commissioned, and sent out?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In modern usage, the term "kingdom" conveys the idea of a nation with identifiable borders, and with its own government, laws, language and customs. However, the biblical concept of kingdom – developed in the Old Testament and enhanced in the Gospels – expressed the idea of *reign* or sovereignty. The kingdom Jesus spoke of was intended to demonstrate that the reign of God – described by the Old Testament revelators – was present with those who believed in Him.

KING•DOM (Greek:  
Bas-il-i'-ah)

1. Royal power  
(sovereignty),  
kingship, dominion,  
rule, or **the reign**  
itself.

2. **The realm** or  
territory subject to a  
king; an undivided  
territory under the  
dominion of a king  
or monarch.

3. **The inhabitants** or  
population subject  
to a king.

**Study these passages from the Old Testament Scriptures:**

1 Chronicles 29:10-11; Psalms 47:6-8; 93:1, 2; 103:19; 145:10-13; Daniel 2:44; 4:3.

**Then answer the following questions:**

- 1. For what length of time does the kingdom of God endure?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Over whom does God reign?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Over what does God reign?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The Old Testament contains many passages of Scripture that honor God as Lord of all, and for all eternity. Exodus 15:18 states, "The Lord shall reign forever and ever." Numerous OT verses also describe the glory, majesty and sovereignty of God. What emerges out of these Scriptures is a picture of the kingdom that is eternal, universal, and present throughout human history.

**II. THE PROPHETIC KINGDOM**

The Old Testament writers describe the kingdom of heaven as the invisible, hidden reign of God over all creation. However, the great prophets of Israel also describe a time in the future when God's kingdom will become visible and acknowledged by all – in the heavenly realms and on earth. The Lord revealed to his prophet Daniel the hidden meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue made of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay.

*"In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever."*

*Daniel 2:44*

The awesome statue represented successive kingdoms that would eventually be destroyed and replaced by the indestructible kingdom of God; a kingdom not made by human hands (Daniel 2:28-45).

**Read the following verses from the Old Testament and write in the spaces provided what they say about the reign of God:**

Isaiah 2:2-4: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is. 66:18-24: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Daniel 2:37-45: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Micah 4:1-8: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Haggai 2:6-9: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Read the following verses from the Old Testament and write in the spaces provided what they say about the One who will *rule* over this kingdom:**

## PSALM 24

The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.

For He has founded it upon the seas And established it upon the rivers.

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive a blessing from the Lord And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

This is the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face—even Jacob. Selah.

Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in!

Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, And lift them up, O ancient doors,

That the King of glory may come in! Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.

Selah.

Isaiah 11:1-10: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 23:5, 6: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 33:14-18: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Daniel 7:13-14, 27: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Micah 5:4: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Zechariah 9:9, 10: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The Old Testament prophets established two important foundational truths concerning the kingdom of God that Jesus would reinforce in His teachings. The first was the affirmation that God is King over all of the earth; God is sovereign, and in control of all creation. Though the kingdom may be hidden to those who are of this world, Jesus taught it is revealed to those who diligently seek it (Matt. 6:9, 10, 33; 7:7, 8, 13, 14). The second foundational truth concerning the kingdom of heaven,

*"The Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit are the two missing notes in much of our Christianity. And Jesus made both of them central – one the pattern, the other the power."*

*E. Stanley Jones*

found in the Old Testament, is imbedded in the prophecies concerning the person of the Messiah who would establish a visible kingdom on the earth and who would rule over all the nations on the earth. Jesus clearly stated that the signs of His Second Coming would be visible to all who are alive at that time (Matt. 24:27, 30, 33; 25:31, 32).

### III. JESUS AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Although the concept of a heavenly kingdom to come at some time in the future was totally familiar to the children of Israel, **Jesus' teachings on the kingdom of heaven were uniquely His.** Jesus spoke of the necessity of being "born again" only once (John 3:3-7), but Jesus is quoted as referring to the kingdom eighty-two times. And in fact, His teaching on being born again is in direct reference to His teaching Nicodemus concerning the prerequisites for entering into the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5).

**Read the following verses:**

- **Matthew 4:23; 9:35**
- **Mark 1:14, 15**
- **Luke 8:1; 9:11**
- **Acts 1:3**

**After studying these Scriptures, what do you conclude about the importance of the kingdom of God in Jesus' message?**

Those who came to hear Jesus, were immersed in the worldview shaped by the Old Testament; they had come to expect an earthly Messiah who would *immediately* overthrow the Gentile nations that were oppressing the Jewish people and rule over the territories originally

*"Truly, truly,  
I say to you,  
unless one is  
born again  
he cannot  
see the  
kingdom of  
God."  
  
John 3:3*



conquered by David. It is clear from the Gospels that the kingdom Jesus said was "in the midst" of them was totally different from the one they had come to expect.

**Study Matthew 11:2-19 and consider the following questions:**

- **Considering the Jewish expectations of the Messiah, how would John the Baptist's circumstances cause him to question if Jesus was indeed the "Expected One"?**
- **In what way did Jesus' answer to John the Baptist's question challenge John's presuppositions about the kingdom of God?**
- **Note: Ps. 118:22-23; Psalm 146:6-8; Isaiah 29:18, 19; Isaiah 35:3-6; & Isaiah 61:1-3. What did Jesus' answer reveal about the Messiah-King prophesied in the Old Testament?**

**This gospel of the kingdom was essential to all of what Jesus did and taught;** Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each tell the story of how Jesus went through all the cities and villages, teaching and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. He began His public ministry by announcing, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15), and in His final days with His disciples, before His Ascension, Jesus spoke of the things concerning the kingdom (Acts 1:3). And yet it was clear that the kingdom of which He spoke did not fit the Old Testament expressions of that kingdom. Nowhere did Jesus ever suggest that the Old Testament prophets had been in error or that their prophecies should be set aside –

*"Jesus' royalty is not of this world. It is based on character. It is ignored by the proud, but welcomed by the poor. It is fairest to those whose eyes are anointed to penetrate the veil and discern the eternal realities; and of their enthusiasm, praise to God is the irresistible expression."*

*F. B. Meyer*

He said only that the *time* of fulfillment for all that was written was in the Father's hands (Acts 1:7).

What then did Jesus mean when he used this term? Clearly He was introducing a *new* and *unexpected* reality of God's kingdom here on earth to His disciples – it is also clear that most of Jesus' public teaching described His bold new concept of living as citizens of this invisible kingdom. As we proceed, we will investigate first what Jesus publicly proclaimed about this gospel in His sermons and in His parables, and then what and how He taught His disciples about the kingdom.

## 2. Kingdom Citizenship

### I. KINGDOM CIVICS 101

Often, in our public schools, children are taught the basics of what it means to be a good citizen of this country. The textbook will include chapters on the way local, state, and federal agencies are structured and how they relate to one another. They will also include chapters on how the individual citizen relates to each branch of government, what are the rights and privileges inherent for the citizens of the country, and how each citizen can access those rights and privileges. Included in the textbook will also be a chapter on the responsibilities and duties of being a citizen of this country – what we might call the *cost of citizenship*. It is possible for those who were born in another country to apply for, and receive citizen status to this country through a process called *naturalization*. It is also possible for a person to renounce his citizenship to this country or to have his citizenship revoked; he then becomes an *expatriate*. When our public schools and other public institutions fail to properly teach the basic principles upon which this country is founded, it produces citizens who do not understand their rights, who claim privileges they do not own, and who shirk their responsibilities as citizens of this nation.

Most of what Jesus taught to the masses that followed Him could be classified as Kingdom Civics 101. Jesus made it clear that no one on this earth is born a citizen of His kingdom, but He showed how anyone who wants to become a naturalized citizen of His kingdom could obtain citizenship. Jesus taught about the rights and privileges of

*Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb can he?"*

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

*John 3:4, 5*

the citizens of His kingdom – as well as the duties and cost of citizenship. Many refused His offer of citizenship to the kingdom of God, and chose instead to die expatriates. But those who believed in Jesus and received Him as king, entered in through the narrow gate where they forever live as citizens of His kingdom: Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." – Matthew 7:13,14.

**Read the following verses: Rom. 8:15, 23; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5. How does our citizenship in God's kingdom differ from a naturalized citizen of the kingdoms of this earth? \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## II. JESUS' KINGDOM SERMONS

*Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. Luke 8:1*

Jesus taught in a day when there was no electronic media to broadcast His message; there were no cassette tapes and no CDs to record His sermons to pass on to those who had not heard Him preach; and there were no printing presses to print and distribute written copies of His sermons. Like any itinerant preacher of His time, Jesus had to personally deliver His message from "one city and village to another." However, sometimes Jesus would send His messengers ahead of Him.

*"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom."  
Luke 12:32*

**Read Mark 6:7-13, Luke 9:1-6, and Luke 10:1, 8, 9, 17.**

**What did Jesus instruct His disciples to say and do?**

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More often than not, news that Jesus was in the area would be spread by word-of-mouth and the people would flock to wherever Jesus was ministering (Matthew 4:24; Mark 10:1; Luke 6:17, 18; John 6:1, 2, 24). The Gospels record several of these instances. By comparing the different accounts of Jesus' sermons to His disciples and to the masses that followed Him – allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture – we can gain a fuller understanding of this gospel of the kingdom Jesus preached.

Matthew chapters five through seven, and Luke chapters six, eleven and twelve contain the bulk of Jesus' public teachings about the nature of the kingdom of heaven and about the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizens of that kingdom.

**Read Matthew 8:10-12; 11:11; Luke 12:32; 13:24-30; and John 10:14-16. What do these verses tell us about those who become citizens of the kingdom of heaven?**

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**Read Matthew 4:17; 5:20; 18:3, 4; Mark 10:15; and John 3:3, 5. What did Jesus teach are the prerequisites for entrance into the kingdom of heaven?**

*Jesus did not merely preach the good news of the kingdom; He brought the kingdom with Him.*

*This is the essence of gospel of the kingdom: that in the presence of the King the rule of God appears on the earth.*

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### III. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The scene in Matthew chapters five, six and seven are reminiscent of chapters twenty-seven through thirty in the book of Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy, Moses gives final instructions to the children of Israel for when they entered into the Promised Land (fulfilled in Joshua 8:30-35). Moses assembled the people and instructed them concerning the blessings of obeying their covenant with God and the curses, sure to visit them, if they disobeyed the terms and conditions of the covenant. Also known as the Palestinian Covenant, these blessings and curses were to be recited before the people from Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, respectively. Though God was about to establish the nation of Israel in the land He had chosen for them (Deut. 26:9), Israel was *not* the kingdom of God Jesus described.

**Read Deuteronomy 26:18, 19; 28:1, 9, 10; 29:24, 25; 30:19, 20; Genesis 12:2, 3; Exodus 19:4-6; Psalm 67; Isaiah 43:9-13; Jeremiah 1:5; and Ezekiel 5:7, 8, 14, 15. What was God's purpose for establishing the nation of Israel?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Deuteronomy 29:22-29 implies Moses knew that a time would come when a generation of Israelites would

Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Your name's sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm); when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name.

1 Kings 8:41 – 43



fail to keep the conditions for the blessings of God set before the people from Mount Gerizim, which would bring upon the nation the curses promised from Mount Ebal. The children of Israel would be uprooted from the land by the Lord, and cast by Him into another land where they would be held captives.

However, their condition would not be without hope. Moses provides the remedy for their return to God's favor.

**Read Deuteronomy 30 (note verses 2, 6, 10, 19 & 20); compare them with the verses above describing the prerequisites for becoming citizens of the kingdom of God. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is not a radical departure from the Old Testament Mosaic teachings. Jesus' teachings were never intended to replace any of the Law and Prophets handed down from Moses to Malachi. Neither was Jesus establishing a "New Law." As we carefully examine His teachings, we will discover that what Jesus was doing was resetting misplaced priorities. The scribes and Pharisees had lost the true meaning of the Scriptures (John 5:38-40). They emphasized works over righteousness; they chose religion over a childlike faith and love for God the Father; they valued their Jewish birthright over their citizenship in the kingdom of God; and they had no concept of a Spirit filled life. Jesus' public sermons were intended to expose the counterfeit teachings of the scribes and Pharisees and point the way into the

*“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”*

*Matthew 5:17, 18*

kingdom of heaven for all those who were desperately seeking it.

#### IV. THE BEATITUDES

Matthew chapter five, verses three through ten record Jesus' introductory message of life in the kingdom of God. He characterizes citizens of His kingdom as "blessed." *Makarios*, the Greek term used here for "blessed" means more than a temporary feeling of happiness based upon circumstances. Blessed in this context means being approved by God, and rewarded eternally with blessings that cannot be measured by worldly standards.

**Read Matthew 5:3 – 12 and compare them with Deuteronomy 28:1 – 14. What kinds of blessings are promised in Deuteronomy and what are they dependent upon? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**What kinds of blessings are promised in Matthew and what are they dependent upon? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Jesus makes it clear from the beginning that the blessings of the kingdom of heaven are assured for the person whose attitudes, values, and commitments are rooted in the eternal things of God. Jesus pointed his listeners to the inward marks of the kingdom rather than the external and temporary blessings of this world. This world may bring us many troubles and much sorrow, but those who value their citizenship in the kingdom of

*“Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal.”*

John 6:27

heaven will experience the true blessings of God through them all.

**OUTLINE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

<u>BEATITUDE</u>	<u>APPLICATION</u>
VS 3-5 INWARD (HEART)	MATT. 5:13-20
VS 6 UPWARD (GOD)	MATT. 6
VS7-12 OUTWARD (OTHERS)	MATT. 7

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God (5:3).* The way into the kingdom of heaven is lost to those who strive to enter into it through their own efforts. Those who recognize their own spiritual bankruptcy and cry out to God for salvation will be found by Him. The kingdom belongs to those who utterly and completely depend upon the finished work of Christ upon the cross for salvation.

**Read the following verses from the Old Testament: Ps. 40:17; Ps. 69:29, 33; Isa. 61:1-3; 66:2; & Hosea 14:1, 2. How do they compare with Matthew 5:3?**

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*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (5:4).* God is close to the brokenhearted of this world. It is only those who are deeply affected by the sorrows visited upon this fallen world who seek and find God's lasting comfort.

*“I have glorified  
You on the  
earth, having  
accomplished  
the work which  
You have given  
Me to do.”*

**Read the following verses from the Old Testament: Ps. 51:17; Isa. 61:2, 3; Lam. 3:19-23 & Zech. 12:10. How do they compare with Matthew 5:4? \_\_\_\_\_**

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*Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth (5:5).* Gentleness is not weakness; it takes an enormous strength of character to abandon one's own selfish self-interests and place them at the feet of God. "Not my will, but Thy will be done!" is the heart's cry of anyone who is a citizen in God's kingdom. A person who is boastful, full of pride, and who seeks to "lord over" others is useless to the kingdom: Jesus warned, "all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword" (Matt. 26:52). Those who humbly submit to the reign of God will experience the blessings of God in their daily lives, and will "inherit the earth" upon Jesus' final triumph over the kings of this earth (Rev. 21:7).

**Read the following verses from the Old Testament: Num. 12:3; Ps. 18:35; Ps. 37:7 – 11; Isa. 57:15; & Zep. 2:3. How do they compare with Matt. 5:5? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Note the progression thus far. Citizens of God's kingdom

1. Recognize their spiritual poverty
2. Are grieved over their sins and the sins of others
3. Submit to the reign of God with meekness.

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (5:6).*

**ISAIAH 42:1-4**

**Behold, My Servant,  
whom I uphold;**

**My chosen one in  
whom My soul  
delights.**

**I have put My Spirit  
upon Him;**

**He will bring forth  
justice to the nations.**

**He will not cry out or  
raise His voice,**

**Nor make His voice  
heard in the street.**

**A bruised reed He will  
not break And a dimly  
burning wick He will  
not extinguish;**

**He will faithfully bring  
forth justice. He will  
not be disheartened or  
crushed**

**Until He has  
established justice in  
the earth; And the  
coastlands will wait  
expectantly for His  
law.**

Another characteristic of a person who belongs to the kingdom of heaven is a deep desire to know and do God's will. Those who love this world and the things of this world will never be satisfied. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, is not from the Father, but from the world" (1 John 2:16). Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness know that this world is fading away, and the evil ungodly things of this world will go with it, but those who belong to God's kingdom will live forever and will be forever satisfied.

**Read the following verses from the Old Testament: Pss. 32; & 37; Prov. 21:21; Hos. 10:12; & Zeph. 2:3. How do they compare with Matt. 5:6? \_\_\_\_\_**

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*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy (5:7).* Citizens of the kingdom understand they are objects of God's mercy. This awareness should drive us to show the same mercy towards others. We serve a King who is "rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us" (Eph. 2:4). Therefore, what we have received in abundance, we must give abundantly.

**Read the following verses from the Old Testament: Ex. 25:22; 34:5 – 7; Pss. 25 & 145; Prov. 21:21; Lam. 3:22, 23; Zech. 7:9-14. How do they compare with Matt. 5:7? \_\_\_\_\_**

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*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (5:8).* Purity of heart is not something manufactured by citizens of the kingdom; it is a gift of God's unmerited favor by a

*"If we are concerned about our own spiritual formation or that of others, this vision of the kingdom is the place we must start. Remember, it is the place where Jesus started. It was the gospel he preached."*

*Dallas Willard*  
From his book –  
*Renovation of the Heart*

"new and living way" Jesus. When our King grants us purity of heart, he gives us:

- **Judicial Purity** or Justification – forgiveness, absolution from guilt (Romans 8:1 – 4)
- **Holiness** or Sanctification – the removal of sin (Hebrews 10:19 – 22).

It is only the pure in heart that are able to "see" God in this life on earth, and it is only the pure in heart who will see God eternally, in the kingdom of heaven.

**Read the following verses from the Old Testament: Ps. 24:1 – 4; Ps. 73:1; Ps. 119:7 – 11; Is. 47:10; Jer. 31:31 – 34; Ezek. 11:19 – 21; & 18:31. How do they compare with Matt. 5:8? \_\_\_\_\_**

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*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (5:9).* To the kingdoms of this world, "peace" simply means "an interlude between wars". But in the kingdom of heaven, "peace" has a greater significance in that it speaks of health and wholeness that emanates from the innermost being of a person who has been restored to a proper relationship with God. The peace this world has to offer is primarily external, military, or political and it is temporary at best. The peace Jesus has to offer is spiritual – from the heart. Lasting peace between nations, between individuals, between man and nature, and between man and his Creator flow from the hearts of individuals secure in the presence of the supreme peacemaker, Jesus Christ. Citizens of the kingdom are called to be peacemakers, sowing seeds of peace and producing the fruit of righteousness in the midst of this troubled world (James 5:18).

*“Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”*

*Hebrews 12:14*

**In Jewish idiom, to be called a "son of" something suggests a strong identity or likeness. A "son of a fisherman" is a fisherman, and a "son of God" is one who bears a likeness to God Himself - in other words, "sons of God" in the context of Matthew 5:9, means "a people who are like God in word and deed."**

**Read the following verses from the Old Testament:**

**Lev. 26:3 – 6; Num. 6:23 – 27; Jud. 6:23, 24; 1 Sam.**

**20:42; Ps. 4; & Is. 9:6, 7. How do they compare with**

**Matt. 5:9? \_\_\_\_\_**

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*Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (5:10 – 12).* Persecution comes in many forms in this world; Jesus warned His disciples, "in the world you have tribulation" (John 16:33). The poor and needy will always be oppressed by the rich and powerful; persecution based upon race, culture, or gender often characterizes even the most "civilized" of nations. However, those who choose to live as citizens of God's kingdom will inevitably find themselves in conflict with the all kingdoms of this world. God's special blessing is reserved for those who are *persecuted for the sake of righteousness* (5:10) and *because of Me* (5:11). A person who is truly poor in spirit, who mourns because of sin and is meek, who hungers for righteousness and truth, and who shows mercy to those around him, who is pure in heart and a peacemaker, will unintentionally expose the sinfulness of those who belong to this world. Those who reject the kingdom of heaven for themselves will scorn and persecute those who belong to the kingdom of heaven. Like the prophets of old they may suffer much for

*"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you."*

*John 15:18, 19*

the sake of His kingdom, but Jesus encourages His people to *rejoice and be glad* (5:12) because great will be their reward in heaven.

The prophets of the Old Testament were held in the highest regard by the Jewish people. Most of those prophets endured persecution and some were put to death for their uncompromising proclamation of the Word of God. A careful study of the Old Testament prophets will show that far from being lonely visionaries, sending proclamations down to the people, these men and women lived and ministered in the midst of the people. Though some were set apart as fulltime prophets, most lived and worked in the normal vocations of their day – all but a few married, raised children and had ties to the community. The prophets were individuals chosen by God with a specific mission to their generation. Central to their mission was:

- Pointing the people of Israel back to their destiny to be "a holy people to the Lord" their God and chosen by Him to be "a people for His possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6).
- And pointing the nations to the God of Israel as the one true and living God over all of creation (Jer. 10:10 – 16).

Matthew 5:3–12 establishes the character of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven, what blessings are for those who choose to enter in, as well as the expected opposition from those who remain at enmity with God's reign and rule over the earth. In the following verses Jesus speaks of the mission of the kingdom citizens to the world around them: their mission is being "salt" and "light."

*"I am the Lord, I have  
called you in  
righteousness,  
I will also hold you by  
the hand and watch  
over you,  
And I will appoint  
you as a covenant  
to the people,  
As a light to the  
nations..."*

*Isaiah 42:6*



## V. THE MISSION OF THE KINGDOM CITIZEN

*You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:13 –16).*

The world and everything in it is passing away. The picture of decay and of a deep darkness covering the earth is descriptive of a fallen people, living in a fallen world. The good news of the kingdom is that God has not abandoned this world in its fallen condition. Jesus uses the images of salt and light to communicate to His disciples the mission of citizens of His kingdom; the choices of these images were rich with meaning to the people who lived in biblical times.

**Salt** (sodium chloride) was essential to preserve food from corruption. In a time and place where fresh food supplies were scarce and where refrigeration and other methods of food preservation were unavailable, salt was essential to maintain the life of a community. In biblical times salt was most commonly found in the form of the mineral *halite*, or rock salt – found in beds deposited by the dehydration of ancient bodies of salt water. Most commercial salt was produced by steam or direct-heat evaporation of rock-salt brine; once the salt was extracted the remaining minerals were worthless and thrown far away from productive areas of land.

**Salt was once an important medium of exchange throughout the Mediterranean world; covenants between individuals or nations were often ratified with the exchange of salt. At one time, Roman soldiers received their pay in the form of salt cakes; the soldier's money allowance, or *salarium*, is where we got our English term *salary*, for a worker's pay. Salt was commonly used in the religious rites of the Greeks, Romans and Hebrews.**

Salt is necessary to the life of the body. The sodium and chloride of salt, along with potassium, help the kidneys regulate the body's fluid levels and balance of acids and bases. Industrially, salt is the source of chlorine, chloroform, bleaching powders, and baking soda; it is used in the manufacture of disparate products like soap and glass. However, by far, the greatest use of salt today is a seasoning, adding flavor to many of our foods.

**Read the following passages from the Old Testament: Ex. 30:35; Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19; 2 Kings 2:19 – 22; 2 Chron. 13:5; Ezek. 16:4; 43:24 & Zeph. 2:9. How did Jesus' teaching in Matt. 5:13 relate to these passages? (Note also Mark 9:50; & Luke 14:34, 35)**

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**What do these passages tell us about the impact citizens of the kingdom of God should have upon the world around them? (Consider the history of the church in the world as well as the lives of individuals.)**

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*"He cast the salt into the spring of the waters, and so healed the streams and the ground they watered. Thus the way to reform men's lives is to renew their hearts; let those be seasoned with the salt of grace; for out of them are the issues of life."  
Matthew Henry*

*"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."  
Colossians 4:6*

Salt was required in every grain offering presented to the Lord (Lev. 2:13). The altar was the table of the Lord; and therefore, salt being eternally present at His table, represents the preserving and cleansing aspects of God's saving grace. The presence of salt also speaks of God's covenant with mankind. Men confirmed their covenants with each other by sharing a covenant meal together, at which salt was always present. Jesus invites us to open the door and let Him come in that we might dine at the table He has prepared for us – thus confirming His new covenant with us (Psalm 23; Revelation 3:20). Among the ancients, salt was also a symbol of friendship. This new covenant, written on our hearts by the Holy Spirit, also speaks of God's desire to be in intimate friendship with us, "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made know to you" (John 15:15).

It is the presence of Christ within the citizens of the kingdom of heaven that creates a thirst for God in those who are outside of His kingdom (Col. 1:25 – 29). There is nothing more useless in this world than "Christ-less" Christians; they are no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

The picture of **light** communicates a different aspect of the influence the sons of the kingdom are to have in this world. The primary purpose of light is to make reality or truth visible, thereby giving direction and guidance to those who are searching for the kingdom of God. There are over 200 references to light in the Bible, making light an important theme throughout the Bible. Genesis 1:3 records the first words spoken by God, "Let there be light"; Exodus 13:21 describes how the children of Israel were led through the darkness of the wilderness by a pillar

*"Salt is good;  
but if the salt  
becomes  
unsalty, with  
what will you  
make it salty  
again?"*

*Have salt in  
yourselves, and  
be at peace with  
one another."*

*Mark 9:50*

*There is  
nothing more  
useless in this  
world than a  
"Christ-less"  
Christian.*

of light; Leviticus 24:2 contains God's instructions to the priests to keep the light of the tabernacle burning continually. The final chapter of the Bible describes the kingdom of heaven in the new heavens and the new earth to come, and includes these words, "And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:5).

**In Matthew 5:14 –16, Jesus identifies two sources of light; what are they?**

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The Lord strategically positions His citizens that they might shine His light into this world of darkness. Believers are the "light of the world" in the same way a lamp carries light or in the same way a city on a hill guides the weary sojourners to a place where they might find rest. Citizens of the kingdom of heaven stand out against the darkness when they follow Jesus, the true Light of the world; they do not generate their own light, but the "Light of life" shines through them (John 8:12).

**Read Psalms 18:28; 27:1; 36:9; 43:3; 56:13; 119:105, 130; Isaiah 9:2 & 42:6. How do these Old Testament passages compare with Jesus' teachings on light in Matthew 5:14 - 16 and in Mark 4:21, 22?**

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*"As the first apartment in the tabernacle was illuminated by the sevenfold light of the candlestick, and as the church composed of all genuine believers on earth in every age, is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, so will the church triumphant in heaven, that great temple, not made with hands, be a place of glorious light; and the light will never go out, it will burn always..."*  
William Brown

Without light, sight is impossible. God created the eye to be the "light of the body" in the same way a candlestick or lamp – after being lit – illuminates a room (in this context, the word *body* is interpreted to mean the whole *person*). Upon being "born again" into the kingdom of heaven, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within the whole person, and floods the body, soul and spirit with God's light and life. The light of the Holy Spirit within the soul brings understanding and judgment, and the power to discern truth and falsehood. "When your eye is *clear*, your whole body also is full of light..." Here, the Greek word *haplous*, "single" or "healthy" is used. Jesus makes the point that whether or not a person sees the kingdom of God depends not on the light's brightness, but on the condition of the person receiving the light. This gospel of the kingdom will come into those people whose hearts are open to receive it; and wherever the reign of God is established, it will bring the light of truth and righteousness with it.

**Read Isaiah 5:20, 21 & John 9:35 – 41. How do they relate to Jesus' teachings on salt and light in Matthew 5:13 and Luke 11:33 – 36? \_\_\_\_\_**

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## VI. THE KINGDOM LIFESTYLE

In His opening statements of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described the rights (blessings) and the responsibilities (mission) of the citizens of the Kingdom. Jesus now turns His attention to the lifestyle (behavior) of those citizens. Although the kingdom Jesus ushered in is an "invisible kingdom" and not of this earth, the "present reality" of the kingdom of God is manifest in the behavior of those who operate as "salt" and "light" in the visible kingdoms of this world.

### *Jesus and the Law of Moses*

*Matthew 5:17-20*

*Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

After the children of Israel reached Mount Sinai, God gave to His people the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and all other laws that were central to the establishment of Israel as a people in covenant relationship with God (Exodus 21-23). The Ten Commandments consist of broad categorical laws that set forth the absolute principles intended to guide all

*"Here the King works  
in the hearts of men,  
changing the values  
and the behaviors  
from which behavior  
springs. In Jesus'  
kingdom any  
outward conformity  
without an inward  
commitment is  
unthinkable!"*

Lawrence O. Richards

people into a right relationship with the one, true living God over all of Creation. The Ten Commandments do not specify how they are to be enforced or what penalties are to be applied if they are broken, but they do make unconditional commands that place moral obligations on all people who seek to live in right relationship to God.

**Read Deuteronomy 4:1-14 and note the verses that describe:**

- **PERMANENCE OF THE LAW**
- **PURPOSE OF THE LAW**
- **PERFECTION OF THE LAW**

Jesus was about to challenge the accepted interpretations of the Law of Moses being taught by the scribes and Pharisees of that day; verses 17-20 of Matthew chapter 5 make it clear that the kingdom lifestyle about which He was teaching is different from – and at the same time in perfect harmony with – the Old Testament revelation. Then Jesus presents specific examples of how the kingdom lifestyle works in relation to the Law of Moses (Matt. 5:21-48) and in relation to God and others (Matt. 6:1 – 7: 29).

**Read Matt. 23:25, 26; Luke 11:39-41; and John 7:24. What was the failure of the religious leaders Jesus addresses in Matthew 5:17-20? \_\_\_\_\_**

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The "kingdom lifestyle" that Jesus promoted **fulfilled** the Law's requirements by shifting the focus of attention away from the outward appearances of religious legalism and dealt with the inward motives and intents of the heart.

To "fulfill" -- Greek, *pleroo*  
"to make full"

**Jesus fulfills the Law by:**

1. **Confirming its validity**
2. **Bringing out its full, originally intended meaning**
3. **Expanding its demands beyond mere outward conformity to inward attitudes of the heart**
4. **Jesus was the One who would reveal the true *eschatological* will of God recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures.**

The true righteousness that "surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees" is from the heart, and is not imposed by the strict adherence to any religious system.

**Read Matt. 12:1, 2; Matt. 15:1, 2; Mark 3:1, 2; Mark 14:55, 56; Luke 11:37, 38; Luke 13:14; John 5:15-18; and John 7:45-49; why would Jesus find it necessary to preface His teachings on the Mosaic Law, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets..."? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Jesus taught that those who followed the scribes and Pharisees, and who thought they could justify themselves before God on the basis of their own acts of righteousness, would not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20). The Law was not intended to bring righteousness, but was intended to expose the sin nature and point sinful men and women back to God (Romans 4:13-18; 5:20, 21; 7:5-7). Without ever nullifying or contradicting the Law, Jesus taught about a righteousness that exceeded what was acceptable to Judaism's elite. Jesus' teachings on the Law almost always shift the emphasis away from an action or behavior the scribes understood the Law to be about, to the *inner attitude* or *motivation* of the sinner seeking a righteousness that comes from God by grace through faith.

#### **JESUS AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

**Read the following Scriptures and write in the space provided what Jesus taught about each of the Commandments.**

*"Now, O Israel,  
listen to the  
statutes and the  
judgments which  
I am teaching  
you to perform,  
in order that you  
may live and go  
in and take  
possession of  
the land which  
the Lord, the  
God of your  
fathers, is giving  
you."*

*Deut. 4:1*

1. *You shall have no other gods before me* (Ex. 20:3; Deut. 5:11). Jesus' teaching: Matt. 4:10; 6:33; 22:37-40; John 4:21-24. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. *You shall not make for yourself an idol* (Ex. 20:4-6; Deut. 5:8-10). Jesus' teaching: Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13; John 4:21-24. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. *You shall not misuse the name of the Lord* (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). Jesus' teaching: Matt. 5:33-37; 6:9; 23:16-22. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. *Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy* (Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15). Jesus' teaching: Matt. 12:1-13; Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-6; Luke 6:1-11. \_\_\_\_\_

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*“That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”*  
*Mark 7:20-23*

5. *Honor your father and mother* (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). Jesus' teaching: Matt 15:4-6; 19:19; Mark 7:9-13; Luke 18:20. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. *You shall not murder* (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17). Jesus' teaching: Matt. 5:21-24; 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20. \_\_\_\_\_

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7. *You shall not commit adultery* (Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:17). Jesus' teaching: Matt. 5:27-30; 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20. \_\_\_\_\_

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8. *You shall not steal* (Ex. 20:15; Deut. 5:19). Jesus' teaching: Matt. 19:17, 18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20). \_\_\_\_\_

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*“For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.”*

*Romans 7:5, 6*

9. *You shall not give false testimony* (Ex. 20:16; Deut. 5:20). Jesus' teaching: Matt. 5:37; 19:17, 18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20). \_\_\_\_\_

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10. *You shall not covet* (Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21). Jesus' teaching: Luke 12:15-34. \_\_\_\_\_

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***A New Commandment***

*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." John 13:34*

Jesus exercised His authority as the Son of God and delivered to His disciples a new command that they love one another. When Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He answered not from the Old Testament passages concerning the Ten Commandments, but from the *Shema* found Deuteronomy 6:5: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

**Read John 14:15-24; & 15:9-17. What is Jesus teaching us about the relationship between love and obedience in the kingdom of God? \_\_\_\_\_**

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*Shema*: Hebrew "Hear"

The *Shema* was Judaism's basic confession of faith. According to rabbinic tradition, the *Shema* originally consisted only of Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!" It was later expanded to include verses 5-9; 11:13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41.

According to rabbinic law, it was to be recited morning and night. The *Shema* emphasizes God's indivisibility and uniqueness. It also precludes the worship of any other gods and demands a total love and commitment to the one God (*Elohim*). Jesus called Deuteronomy 6:5 the first and great commandment and added the phrase "with all your mind" (Mark 12:30).



### *The Law in the Kingdom of God*

Jesus' teachings on the Law far exceed the demands of the scribes and the Pharisees: "you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). He demonstrated that the righteousness the Law called for was of a very different nature than the righteousness exhibited by Judaism's religious elite (Matt. 5:20). Jesus rightly taught the Mosaic Law: that its regulations and basic principles were intended to reveal God's moral character and inspire men to be like Him. The Law was not given to bring salvation, but was given to drive men back into a right relationship with God where an inner transformation – which only God can work – can take place.

Therefore, in the Kingdom of God the issue in the Old Testament law of murder was not so much the act of violence as the anger that led to it. The issue was not where, when or how to make an offering, but was to bring reconciliation between men and God. The issue was not so much the act of adultery as the lust that led husbands astray and caused men to treat women as objects rather than persons. The issue in the law of divorce was not when it was permissible, but was one of loyalty and commitment to the marriage covenant under God. The issue in the law concerning oaths was not when an oath might be broken, but was the essential integrity and honesty of the individual making the vow before God and men. The issue in the "eye for an eye" principle was not the right of the individual to receive equal compensation for an injury, but the unrighteous demand for revenge when forgiveness is called for. In the kingdom of heaven the call to love one's neighbor does not permit someone to hate anyone outside of the kingdom. All of Jesus' teachings on Old Testament law can best be summed up

*"Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."*

*Romans 3:19, 20*

in His answer to the scribe who asked him which is the greatest commandment of the law. *"And he said to him. 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets"* (Matt. 22:37-40).

*Practicing the kingdom lifestyle.*

**Read Matthew 6:1-7 and 6:16-18. Was Jesus opposed to almsgiving, prayer and fasting? \_\_\_\_\_**

**If not, then what was His objection to the way these were being practiced by the scribes and Pharisees? (Note verses 1, 5, & 16). \_\_\_\_\_**

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Jesus instructs the citizens of His kingdom to give *in secret* to pray *in secret* and to fast *in secret* so that the Father who sees what is done in secret will reward them. Those who seek first the recognition of men are motivated in their actions by a desire to build themselves up in the eyes of men. They may succeed in establishing for themselves a reputation for piety, but their reward will have no eternal value.

Practicing the kingdom lifestyle means our first priority is to establish and nurture an *intimate* relationship with the Father. Men judge by what is on the outside, but only God can judge the heart. We can do the right things out of selfish motivations and still be rewarded in this life, but if we truly seek the kingdom of God and His

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

*Matthew 6:33*

righteousness, we may not receive any recognition in this life, but we will most definitely receive an eternal reward.

**Read Matthew 6:19-34 and Matthew 7:7-11. Was Jesus opposed to people enjoying the good things of this life including good food, drink, and clothes to wear? \_\_\_\_\_**

**If not, what is Jesus' objection to those who eagerly seek those things? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Citizens of the kingdom must have a new focus in life. As Jesus said, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Those outside of God's loving care will be filled with all kinds of anxieties and worries about acquiring wealth and once it is acquired, keeping it. Whereas those who understand they are in the care of their loving Father who is in heaven are freed from the burden of worry over material needs.

**Read Matthew 7:1-6. Did Jesus say that citizens of the kingdom are never in any sense or to any extent to judge another? \_\_\_\_\_**

**What does verse 5 indicate is the precondition for being able to help someone else to see their faults?**

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Jesus' words, "judge not so you will not be judged" are often misinterpreted to mean that if we do not want God to judge us, we must not judge others. But the focus of the

*"If you then,  
being evil, know  
how to give  
good gifts to  
your children,  
how much more  
will your Father  
who is in  
heaven give  
what is good to  
those who ask  
Him!"*

*Matthew 7:11*

passage is on the basic human tendency to treat others the same way they treat us. In other words, if we are judgmental towards others they will be judgmental towards us (for "by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you"); and if we, as citizens of God's kingdom, treat others with love and compassion we can and will have a positive influence over the lives of others. Only first remove the log of self-righteous judgmentalism out of your eye so that you can see that person as God sees them, and minister to them in love.

**What does verse 6 indicate about making proper judgments concerning the spiritual condition of those who reject the message of salvation? (Compare verse 6 with Matthew 10:14) \_\_\_\_\_**

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We must be very cautious whom we condemn as "dogs" and "swine", and give everyone an opportunity to hear the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus commands His disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." We must be careful not to call anyone beyond salvation or assuming all sinners to be inherently wicked; and at the same time we must not waste the message of salvation upon those who refuse to hear. *"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicator, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards*

*"Our Lord Jesus is very tender of the safety of his people, and would not have them needlessly to expose themselves to the fury of those what will turn again and rend them. Let them not be righteous over much, so as to destroy themselves. Christ makes the law of self-preservation one of his own laws, and precious is the blood of his subjects to him."*

*Matthew Henry*

*nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 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" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).*

### ***Kingdom Principles in the Lord's Prayer***

Central to Jesus' teaching on the gospel of the kingdom is His teaching on prayer. Jesus taught that our prayers must be grounded in a one-to-one relationship with our heavenly Father. Outward displays of piety are no substitute for private, intimate and personal prayer in the presence of God. When read in context with Matthew 6:7, the Lord's Prayer is recognized as a pattern that teaches us *how* to pray and is not intended to be formula that tells us *what* to pray.

The Lord's Prayer appears in a slightly different form in Luke's Gospel (11:2-4). It is clear from Luke 11:1 that this instruction on prayer is given at a different time and setting than the Sermon on the Mount. The fact that these prayers are not identical reinforces the idea that Jesus was giving His disciples a pattern and not specific words for addressing God in prayer.

**The Gospels present Jesus as a man of prayer. Read Matthew 11:25-26; 14:23; 26:36-46; Mark 1:35; 6:46; 14:35-42; Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12-13; 9:18; 9:28,29; 10:21; 11:1; 22:32; 22:40-46; John 11:41-42; John 12:27-28. What does Jesus' example as a man of teach us about prayer? \_\_\_\_\_**

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### *The Lord's Prayer*

*Our Father who is in heaven,*

*Hallowed be Your name.*

*Your kingdom come,*

*Your will be done,*

*On earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

*And forgive us our debts,*

*as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

*And do not lead us into temptation,*

*but deliver us from evil.*

*For Yours is the*

*kingdom and the power*

*and the glory forever.*

*Amen.*

Matthew 6:9-13

Jesus' teachings on prayer found in Matthew 6:5-15 and Luke 11:1-13 expose the false and meaningless practice of prayers offered by those who do not have a personal relationship with the Father, and who do not have the kingdom of God and His righteousness as first priority in their lives.

- **Addressing God as *Our Father*** means that –unlike those who worship worthless pagan gods and goddesses- God is not a stranger to us to be called upon in prayer only when we need supernatural help. Citizens of the kingdom confidently approach God in prayer out of a personal relationship with Him: *"remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ...So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household..."* Ephesians 2:12, 13, & 19.
- **Acknowledging God's name as *hallowed*** distinguishes God's holy character from the characters of the man-made idols of mythology. Although God is our Father, He is to be respected and treated as supremely holy and pure. God is light and love and there is no darkness or deceit in Him; neither is there the slightest hint of evil or unrighteousness in Him.

**Read Psalm 66:18; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 John 1:5-9; and Titus 2:11-14. What do these verses of Scripture tell us is the only basis upon which sinful men and women can approach a holy and righteous God?**

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**FALSE ASSUMPTIONS  
UNDERLYING PAGAN  
PRAYER**

- The god or goddess is a *stranger* called upon because of his or her supposed power to help
- Prayer is intended *only* to ask for something wanted or needed
- Prayer is needed to *alert* the deity to something he or she is not aware of
- The *specific words* of the prayer, the *rituals* that accompany the prayer, and the *gifts* offered with the prayer provide the basis on which a deity's favor might be obtained

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God cannot hear the prayers of sinful men and women. It is only through the righteousness of Christ, our heavenly high priest that our sins are forgiven. Once forgiven, we have access to the throne of heaven so that our prayers may be heard (Hebrews 4:16). Not only will God refuse to hear the prayers of sinful men, but there is another aspect to the dynamic of prayer: **Read Genesis 3:8, 9; Isaiah 6:9, 10 (note – Matt. 13:15); Jeremiah 6:10; and Acts 7:54, 57.** What do these verses of Scripture tell us about those who are in sin and idolatry? \_\_\_\_\_

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It is true that God will not heed the prayers of unrepentant, sinful men, but also it is true that sinful men cannot or will not be able to hear God if He speaks to them!

- **Your kingdom come.** Here Jesus reflects the **dual nature** of the kingdom: the future coming of the kingdom in its fullness, and the present reality of the kingdom manifested in and through those who are submitted to the will of the Father on earth.

**Review Luke 10:1-24 (paying close attention to verses**

*"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

Hebrews 4:14-16



9, 11, 21, & 24); Matthew 6:33; 24:14; 25:31, 32; Mark 1:15; Acts 1:6, 7, Daniel 2:44 and Revelation 11:15-19. When we pray, "Thy kingdom come" are we praying for the far-off fulfillment of prophetic Scripture to come or for the present reality of the kingdom to be manifested in our life? \_\_\_\_\_

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- **Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

We miss the true meaning of this statement when we set our minds upon things of this world. We pray about the Father's will for a new job or perhaps a move to another city or country. Students pray about finding God's will for a college or the choice of a career, while young unmarried people pray about God's will for whom they are to marry. Yet Jesus calls the citizens of His kingdom to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). The word translated "will" in this verse is the Greek *thelema*, which expresses not what God wants but what He has determined or predestined. There is an absolute plan regarding the Father's will for all people; Jesus came not to implement His own plan or agenda, but He came to submit Himself fully to His Father's will (John 4:34, and 5:30). The devil's temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; and Luke 4:1-13) was a vain attempt to divert Jesus away from the mission the Father had sent Him to fulfill. Jesus' perfect submission to the will of His Father in heaven is the example all His disciples should follow.

*"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."*

*John 6:40*

**Read Matt. 18:14; John 6:39, 40; Gal. 1:4. What do these Scriptures tell us is the will of the Father for all people? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Read Mark 3:35; Romans 12:2; and Ephesians 1:5 & 9 -12. What do these Scriptures tell us is the will of the Father for His church? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Read Acts 13:22; Romans 8:27, 28; 1 John 2:17, and 5:14 – 15. What do these Scriptures tell us about the blessings for those who do God's will? \_\_\_\_\_**

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When citizens of the kingdom of heaven pray, "Your will be done," they identify themselves with God's will and commit themselves to do it. When we proclaim our selfish will to God and pray, "my will be done" in Jesus' name, our prayers will not be heard. Praying, "Your will be done" is both a personal commitment to moral obedience

*"Sin and rebellion are absent in heaven, but hindrances are present on earth.*

*This is another request for the spreading of God's kingdom rule on earth, primarily through the church as the agent of the kingdom. Our prayers are to be continual reminders to ourselves to 'get with' the kingdom program."*

*Stuart K. Weber*

to the Word of God and a commitment to participate in the fulfillment of the kingdom purposes here on earth.

- **Give us this day our daily bread.** In Jesus' day the term "bread" meant all foods – everything a person needed to sustain life – and in biblical times most people were paid on a daily basis. Wages for the average person were just enough to carry their families through to the next day.

**Taken in context with Matthew 7:7-11 and 6:33, what is Jesus teaching us about depending upon God's provision?** \_\_\_\_\_

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The necessity for God's people to depend upon His provision was not unknown to Jesus' audience.

**Read Exodus chapter 16. What were the lessons taught to the children of Israel in the Wilderness, and how did they relate to the people Jesus addressed? How do they relate to citizens of God's kingdom today?**

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*"Bread is the staff of life, that which enables life to go on. The bread of life is the bread which gives life, and Jesus claims that that life is a life which can defeat even death. It is Jesus' claim that he is able to give life in this world and life in the world to come."*

*William Barclay*

When tempted by the devil in the wilderness, Jesus answered the devil's challenge to turn stone into bread from Deuteronomy 8:3 which says: *"He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord."* The temptation to elevate the attainment of earthly bread ahead of the kingdom is a constant struggle. The poor who live outside the reign of God strive and contend for every scrap of bread. While those who attain a measure of success jealously guard what they believe their own efforts have brought to them and that their own efforts will preserve. But Jesus challenges us to recognize our spiritual hunger and to recognize that that hunger can only be satisfied in Him.

**Read John 6:1-14, 23-35, and 48-58. What do these verses teach about Jesus' ability to sustain us in this temporal life and in eternal life? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Read Matthew 26:26-29 and compare it with John 6:53-58.**

Christians may have differing views on the reality of the sacraments being the actual blood and body of Christ, but the spiritual meaning is clear: citizens of the kingdom must take Jesus Christ into their inmost being – that His very life must enter into them and sustain them spiritually

*"I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh"*

*John 6:51*

in the way the foods they eat and drink sustain their physical bodies.

- **And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.** The Greek verb *aphiemi* (forgive) means "to send forth, or send away". It is the most frequently used verb for forgiveness found in the Gospels. It denotes, "to remit or forgive". **Read Luke 11:4 and compare it with Matthew 6:12.** The Greek word *hamartia* "missing the mark" is used in the Luke text and in the Matthew text the word *ophelema* "debt or that which is legally due" is used. Jesus used the term "debt" in this sermon to convey the idea that sin demands expiation (appeasement or atonement), and thus payment. Also this is the only part of the Lord's Prayer that seems to have a precondition to its fulfillment added on: *"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions (6:14, 15).* Some have interpreted these verses of Scripture to say that Jesus was teaching we must earn God's forgiveness by forgiving others, but when taken in context of Jesus' other teachings on forgiveness, we understand Jesus is referring to a condition of the heart that makes the receiving of God's forgiveness possible.

**Read Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 6:36-38 and 7:40-48.**

**How do these Scriptures reinforce the idea of sin as a debt demanding payment?** \_\_\_\_\_

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*"Jesus' teaching is thus addressed to a community based on the giving and receiving of forgiveness, from which those who refuse to forgive their enemies exclude themselves."*

*Paul Ellingworth*

What do these passages of Scripture tell us about our need to forgive others? \_\_\_\_\_

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Our sense of sin is in proportion to our nearness to God. As we draw near to God the awareness of our own sinfulness and of our need for repentance and for forgiveness from God becomes acute. Jesus demonstrated in both word and deed that the very core of God's being is forgiveness. And nothing demonstrates God's love and forgiveness for those lost in sin more than the cross of Christ. Citizens of God's kingdom will sense the enormity of the sins for which God has forgiven them and will be compelled to forgive the far lesser sins others have committed against them.

- **And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.** The petitions for forgiveness and deliverance address the power of sin over the fallen human nature, and remind us of our need for supernatural help for purity and protection. However, as the citizens of God's kingdom mature and grow in holiness, purity and obedience, they will rely less and less on the prayer for forgiveness and more and more on the prayer for protection. Believers look forward to the day when we all will escape the presence of sin, but until that day we must never let down our guard and stay alert. *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"* (1 Peter 5:8).

*But Jesus  
was saying,  
"Father,  
forgive them  
for they do  
not know  
what they are  
doing"*  
*Luke 23:34*

Read Matthew 26:40, 41; Mark 9:25-29; 13:9-11; Luke 12:35-40; 21:34-36; 22:31, 32; and John 17:15-18. What did Jesus teach His disciples – and all believers – in these verses about the importance of being watchful in prayer? \_\_\_\_\_

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- **For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen** Jesus closes His teaching on prayer with the acknowledgement of the awesome power and eternal glory of His Father. "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God" (John 13:3), set the example for us in that He remained submitted to the Father's authority while on this earth.

Read Matt. 28:18; 1 Cor. 15:23-25; Col. 1:13; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 Tim. 6:15; 2 Tim. 4:1, 2; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:11; Jude 1:25; Rev. 17:14 and 19:16. To whom does this kingdom authority belong? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:15; Col. 2:15; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1; 1 Pet. 4:11; Rev. 12:10 and 19:1. To whom does the power and glory of kingdom belong?

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*And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they were created."*

*Revelation 4:9-11*

VII. THE PROOF OF KINGDOM CITIZENSHIP

(MATTHEW 7:13-29)

Jesus' closing words of this sermon are reminiscent of the words of the covenant that the Lord commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel recorded in Deuteronomy 28-30. **Review Deuteronomy 28:1, 9, 13, 15, & 45 and compare them with Matthew 7:21 & 24.**

True discipleship demands not only a change of heart, but also a change in direction. Most of the Sermon on the Mount dealt with the *inward condition of the heart* necessary to *fulfill* the letter and the spirit of the Law.

**Read Matt. 15:3-6; 22:36-40; Mark 10:3-9; 12:28-34; John 13:34, 35; 14:21, 23, 24; 15:10, 12, 14; & 17. Does Jesus expect His disciples to keep His commands?**

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**Read Rom. 13:10; Gal. 5:1-6, 13-18; Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-27; 1 John 1:5-10 & 2:1, 2. What do these verses tell us about the relationship between Law and grace?**

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Jesus concludes His sermon by describing actions that demonstrate the *outward responses* of a transformed heart that seeks first the kingdom of God.

*"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*  
*Jeremiah 31:33, 34*



**Read Matthew 7:7-29.** In these verses note the theme of twos: Verses 13 – 14 (Two gates); Verses 15 – 20 (Two trees); Verses 21 – 23 (Two wills); & Verses 24 – 27 (Two foundations).

- **Enter through the narrow gate (13-14).**

**Read John 10:7-9 & 14:6. The narrow gate is not a "what"; it is a "who"? Who is the narrow gate?**

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**Read Matt. 10:37-39; 16:24-26; Mark 10:15, 17-27; Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-33; John 6:53-68; & 12:25-26.**

**The narrow gate is the way of total surrender to Christ. Why are there so few who find it?**

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Because the demands of true discipleship are so high, those who choose to enter the kingdom of God will be comparably few in number until the end of the age.

- **Beware of false prophets (15-20).** Jesus warned His followers that false prophets would come and try to lead as many of them astray as possible (Matt. 24:22-24 & Mark 13:19-23). And from the very beginning of the Church Age (2 Cor. 11:12-15; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1-6) until the end of the Age (Rev. 16:13, 24) false prophets have come and will come. But Jesus gave His disciples the key that would expose those

*Evangelists who preach a "costless" Christianity do a tremendous disservice to those who will step forward wanting only an easy escape from the troubles of this fallen world. Salvation is the free gift of God by faith through grace (Rom. 4:16; 5:1; 6:23), but the kingdom is the pearl of great value (Matt. 13:46); it will cost everything to purchase. Those who seek only the open hand of God will turn away when they are faced with the demands of following Jesus.*

counterfeits who come "in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

Jesus did not need to elaborate upon "shepherds" for His audience. Israel was a nation of shepherds and the picture of the shepherd and the sheep is a recurring theme throughout Holy Scripture. Abraham was a shepherd (Gen. 13:2). Moses was a shepherd (Ex. 3:1). David was a shepherd (1 Sam. 16:11). Again and again in the Old Testament, God is pictured as the Shepherd of His people. David began his 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm with the words, "The Lord is my Shepherd." And Psalm 77:20 says, "You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

Jesus grasped the picture of the shepherd and made it an image of Himself. In John 10 Jesus described Himself as the "Good Shepherd" who lays down His life for His sheep. In Matthew 18:12 and Luke 15:4 Jesus describes Himself as the shepherd who diligently searches the wilderness for one lost sheep and rejoices when it is found, and Jesus describes His disciples as His own "little flock" (Luke 12:32).

The picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd was adopted into the language and thought of the early Church. The writer of Hebrews calls Him the Great Shepherd of the sheep (13:20). In his letter to the Ephesians (4:11), Paul includes the ability to pastor in the spiritual gifts "given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (4:7).

**Read John 21:15-19; 1 Peter 2:25 & 5:2-4.**  
**What do these verses tell us about the proper role and attitude of those God has chosen to lead His church?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**"And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.**

**Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert..."**

**From Paul's farewell speech to the elders of the church in Asia Minor recorded in Acts 20.**

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Peter must have been thinking of these words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount and this encounter with Jesus after the resurrection when he compares leaders of Christ's people to shepherds, who must shepherd the flock of God, "not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock".

**Read Matt. 7:16. How will we identify the false prophets?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Matt. 3:1-12. Compare John's sermon with Jesus' teaching in Matt. 7:15-20. John the Baptist admonished the people to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" and Jesus taught, "a good tree cannot produce bad fruit". What is the "fruit" (the produce – that which is brought into view), in the lives of citizens of the kingdom? (Note: Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 4:25-32; 5:2, 7-11; & Colossians 3:12-17).** \_\_\_\_\_

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*Note: the word "pastor" is nothing other than the Latin word meaning "shepherd".*

*"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season. And its leaf does not wither, and in whatever he does, he prospers."  
Psalm 1:1-3*

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**Read John 15:1-8. What does Jesus identify as the essential element for producing fruit? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Jesus makes the point that apart from the vine, a branch quickly dries up and is good for nothing but to be burned in the fire. Jesus is the one and only “true vine” who delivers the Spirit of life and truth (John 6:63 & 16:13) into His branches. Just as a branch is powerless to produce fruit after it is separated from the vine, so believers are powerless to produce the fruit of a godly character without maintaining a deeply personal and intimate relationship with Christ.

- **He who does the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven (21-23).** These verses of Scripture are a sober reminder to all of us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33). God sets His agenda for ministry and He alone must receive the glory.

On the surface, verse 22 seems like a hard verse to understand. How can so many do such wonderful things as these in the name of Jesus and yet Jesus rebuked them as those who “practiced lawlessness”?

*“Too often we have accomplished much in our own eyes but pathetically little in the eyes of God. We cannot grow God’s kingdom; only he can do that.”*

*Henry Blackaby*

**Read Matthew 9:29, 30; John 4:34; John 5:17-44 (pay close attention to verses 17, 19, 20, 30, 31, 36, 43, & 44); John 6:26, 27; John 8:28, 29 and John 12:50. Did Jesus try to promote Himself? Whose will was Jesus accomplishing? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Jesus did only what His Father would have Him do; He came not to seek His own will, but only the will of His Father. The temptation of the Son of Man in the wilderness (recorded in Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12, 13, and Luke 4:1-13) showed Satan's attempt to lead Jesus to use His power and position as the Son of God to do His own will. But Jesus, never less than the Son of God, humbled Himself and served His Father as never more than the Son of Man. Paul said it this way in his letter to the Philippians: *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (2:5-11).*

*"The rule and reign of Jesus Christ starts in us and then works through us to accomplish God's purpose in this world all around us. The principle is important because we must learn to live in submission and obedience to the Lord of the kingdom and do what He has called us to do as leaders... Kingdom-focused leaders must submit to the Lord of the kingdom as Jesus submitted Himself to God the Father when He walked the earth."*

Michael D. Miller

- **He who hears these words and acts on them builds his house upon a sure foundation (24-27).** Both the wise and foolish builders heard the words of Jesus, but only the wise builder acted upon what he heard. Jesus' illustration of the two foundations reinforces the Old Testament Scriptures that promise blessings from obedience and calamity from disobedience.

**Read Deut. 30:19, 20; and Jer. 11:2-11 then compare them with this passage and with Ro. 2:12, 13; Gal. 6:7; and Ja. 1:21-27; does the fact that we are saved by grace through faith exempt us from destructive consequences if we fail to obey God's word?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Proverbs 9:10 states, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" and Matthew 7:24 tells us that wisdom means to put the words of Jesus into practice. The response of those who heard this sermon on the Gospel of the kingdom was amazement, "for He was teaching them as one having authority". The religious leaders of the day had to rely upon established traditions, and their authority to teach others was founded upon recognizable credentials; Jesus Christ's authority and credentials did not come from men, they were His own.

*"What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.'"*

*Romans 9:30-33*

VIII. THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN (LUKE 6:17 – 49).

As noted earlier in this study, the teachings of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount are found in a similar form

in Luke's Gospel. However, Luke is not giving us another version of the same sermon found in Matthew 5-7. He is reporting what Jesus taught about these same themes but on different occasions. Luke 6 contains the longest passage of the other Gospels that covers the same teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount.

**Read Luke 6:20-26 and compare it with Matt. 5:3-12.**

**In what way are they similar, and in what way are they different?** \_\_\_\_\_

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In His sermon on the Plain, Jesus pronounced only four beatitudes then added four "woes". In both the Old and New Testament Scriptures a "woe" is a grave utterance, an exclamation of grief or denouncement warning that God's judgment will befall the subject.

**Read Matt. 11:20-24; 18:7; Mark 14:21; and Luke**

**11:41-53. In these instances Jesus pronounced "woe"(deep sorrow as well as a warning) to those who by their ignorance or treachery would find themselves in opposition to the kingdom of God, why would Jesus include those who are wealthy and prosperous with these?** \_\_\_\_\_

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*"So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the Lord your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever. Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things."*

*Deuteronomy 28:45-47*

It is God's desire to bless and prosper the citizens of His kingdom, however those who place their trust and confidence in the things of this world – those who become comfortably settled into this world and find their security and satisfaction here – are to be mourned over because they have received all they will ever get. Citizens of God's kingdom will often be out of harmony with this world and its ways, they may suffer and be ridiculed by the rich and powerful in human society, but those who "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33) will have provision in this world and will partake of the unfathomable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8) here and for all eternity.

**Read Luke 6:27-49 and compare these verses with Matthew 5:43-48; 7:1-6; 7:12; 7:24-29. While presented in slightly different ways the passages in Luke and Matthew contain the same call to love enemies, the same warning against judging, the same examples of good and bad fruit, and both teach the necessity of not only hearing Jesus' teachings but putting them into practice.**

#### IX. INSTRUCTION ON PRAYER (LUKE 11:1-13)

**Read Luke 11:1-13 and compare this passage with Matthew 6:9-13 and 7:7-11).**

In response to a specific request from His disciples, Jesus instructs them in the same manner as The Lord's Prayer (with minor variations) recorded in Matthew 6, including the illustration found in Matthew 7 intended to encourage confidence in the Father's desire to respond to sincere prayers offered to Him in faith. Jesus also adds a brief parable to illustrate the efficacy of persistent prayer (verses 5-8).

*"Praying in the spirit is most productive in attacking the enemy or resisting his wiles. It can destroy as well as build up. Whatever issues from sin and Satan it destroys, but whatever belongs to God it edifies. Prayer is thus one of the most significant instruments in spiritual work and warfare. Yes, spiritual work and warfare turn on the matter of prayer. If a believer fails in prayer, he in fact fails in everything."*

*Watchman Nee*



## IX. CONCLUSION

The primary focus of Jesus' earthly ministry was the proclamation and demonstration of the reality of the kingdom of God. For almost three and one half years Jesus taught His disciples the principles of kingdom living and prepared them for the time when He would ascend to His heavenly throne until His return at the end of the age. Jesus would warn His disciples that the time would come when He would be rejected by men and crucified, but He would rise from the dead – all according to Old Testament prophecy. Yet the bulk of His sermons and teaching ministry were intended to correct the false teachings and misinterpretations about the Messiah and His reign. The Jews readily accepted the Old Testament's portrait of God as sovereign over the whole world and over history; they embraced those prophecies that spoke of a worldwide messianic kingdom ruled from David's throne in Jerusalem. However, they failed to recognize the "suffering servant" who would come as the "Lamb of God" to take away the sins of the world. The kingdom Jesus ushered in was not a political kingdom, established by force of arms and maintained like other earthly kingdoms. The kingdom Jesus brought with Him is the eternal, invisible kingdom that exists within the hearts of those who have been truly "born again", not of the flesh but of the Spirit.

The Gospel of the Kingdom is the gospel Jesus preached. It is authentic because it is the original and comes directly from the source of all Truth, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The kingdom of God Jesus described is in alignment with the whole Law and all of the Prophets. At the same time Jesus goes far beyond the accepted interpretation of the Law. His sermons also reveal many unexpected attributes of the prophetic kingdom and its King. Jesus fulfilled the Law by correctly interpreting the Law and emphasizing the fact that it is not outward obedience to the demands of the Law that places man in right standing with God, but it is a healthy inner spiritual life, flowing out of a personal relationship with God the Father that surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees and enables the citizens of His kingdom to fulfill their mission to be "salt" and "light" in this world.

In His public sermons Jesus laid out the rights and responsibilities of those who chose to enter into His kingdom. In the kingdom of heaven, those who repent of their sins and believe in the Son of God are born again and are given a new heart. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they become sons of God – people who are like God in word and deed. Prayer is essential to citizens of the kingdom because prayer is communion with God the Father. Through prayer the will of the Father is revealed to His people and through prayer our requests are made known to God.

Jesus' sermons emphasized the "proofs" of citizenship for those who claimed to be His disciples. Jesus proclaimed there is only one entrance into the kingdom: through Him. He warned His disciples to watch out for false prophets that would appear in the midst of them like wolves in sheep's clothing. Jesus identified Himself as the "Good Shepherd" who does not take advantage of the sheep, but cares for them and lays down His life for them. False prophets are exposed by the bad fruit they produce, for as Jesus said, "a bad tree cannot bear good fruit". Those who are truly disciples of Jesus Christ will abide in Him and bear the "good fruit" of the Spirit-led life. They will both know and do God's will and give Him the glory in all things. The final "proof" of citizenship in God's kingdom was summed up in the parable of the two builders: those who both hear and obey the words of Jesus are like the wise builder who avoided catastrophe by building his house upon a sure foundation of solid rock.

Everywhere Jesus went the crowds were amazed at His teaching. He exhibited an authority that no man could bestow and that neither the scribes nor Pharisees could take away. Jesus demonstrated the reality of His kingdom through the many miracles He performed. He gave His disciples the authority to heal the sick and over all the power of the enemy saying, "Truly, truly... he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father" (John 14:12).

*"Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them."*

*Luke 10:23b, 24*

## *Note:*

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In part two of “This Gospel of the Kingdom” we will study the parables of the kingdom Jesus taught to His disciples. These parables reinforce the teachings found in Jesus’ sermons and illustrate many of the principles of kingdom life Jesus introduced to His disciples. As we examine these parables we will discover that far from being brief pastoral stories intended to help the simple and uneducated understand what Jesus was teaching, they are powerful word pictures intended to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom to those who are open to hear from God while hiding these same truths from those whose hearts are too hard, rocky or thorny to hear and receive the Word of God plainly spoken. These parables speak of a kingdom established by God’s grace, generosity and loving-kindness; they tell us how citizens of this kingdom are not only forgiven, but also how they must be forgiving. These parables teach us that there is no room in His kingdom for the self-serving or the self-righteous – a principle which will cause those who had been first in this world to be last in the kingdom and those who were last in this world to be first in His heavenly kingdom. These parables teach that the doors to the kingdom of heaven have been thrown wide open to all peoples, regardless of their worthiness, because those who had been chosen in the first place refused to heed the King’s invitation to come. These parables teach the citizens of the kingdom to wait expectantly for the return of their King, and to make personal preparations for the unknown hour of His return; during this period of waiting, the citizens of this kingdom act in willing submission to their absent King, and faithfully serve His interests with all the resources He has provided.

Our hope and prayer is that you have been both strengthened and encouraged by this study – remembering that Bible study is good, but it is of little value until what has been learned is brought to life by personal revelation from the Holy Spirit, and applied in faith by the diligent disciple, “approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

AMEN

# THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM Part two: The Parables of the Kingdom

"This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations..." Matthew 24:14

## A STUDY GUIDE

For Group or Individual Bible Study

## This Gospel of the Kingdom Study Guide

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## FORWARD

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law;  
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.  
I will open my mouth in a parable.  
I will utter dark sayings of old.  
Which we have heard and known,  
And our fathers have told us.  
We will not hide them from their children,  
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord.  
And His strength and His wonderful works  
That He has done.” Psalm 78:1-4*

In Part One of our study of “This Gospel of the Kingdom” we examined the sermons of our Lord Jesus Christ, and demonstrated how the *kingdom* had a significant role in His teachings. In those sermons, Jesus reinforced the ideas that the kingdom of God is eternal, universal, and that the manifestation of the kingdom in its fullness lies ahead in the history of this earth. Yet, through His sermons, Jesus revealed a deeper and fuller understanding of the *present reality* of the kingdom. It was his mission, not only to demonstrate, but also to teach his disciples how to unlock the mysteries and power of the kingdom of heaven.

In His sermons, Jesus also introduced a *new* and *unexpected* reality of God’s kingdom here on Earth to His disciples. In particular, His “Sermon on the Mount” described this bold new concept of how the citizens of His eternal and invisible kingdom should live. Jesus described not only the rights and privileges of the citizens of His kingdom, but also the duties and responsibilities of those citizens.

The people were amazed at Jesus’ teachings because He not only spoke with an authority that no man ever had, but also because everywhere he went, Jesus demonstrated the reality of His kingdom through the many miracles He

*“All these things  
Jesus spoke to  
the multitudes in  
parables; and  
without a parable  
He did not speak  
to them, that it  
might be fulfilled  
which was spoken  
by the prophet,  
saying: ‘I will open  
My mouth in  
parables; I will  
utter things kept  
secret from the  
foundation of the*

performed. Above and beyond His personal power and authority, Jesus also gave His disciples the authority in His name to heal the sick and over all the power of Satan. *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do because I go to my Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.” John 14:12-14*

#### THE MISSION OF THE PARABLE

The Old and New Testaments contain two hundred and fifty parables, emblems or figures of speech employed by a variety of authors. In each case, the parables of the Bible – especially those used by the Lord Jesus Christ – were intended to communicate or reinforce divine truths. Jesus recognized that the parabolic method of presenting truth was well established in Jewish literature, and He incorporated the parable into His teachings, “and without a parable he did not speak to them.” However, Jesus elevated this method of teaching to its highest level, and contributed His unique parables to reinforce the efficacy of this style of spiritual teaching.

A careful study of Christ’s parables indicates they are far more than simple pastoral stories designed to help humble and uneducated peasants understand His teachings. The parables of Jesus are powerful word pictures intended to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven to those who are open to hear from God, while simultaneously hiding these same truths from those whose hearts are too hard, rocky or thorny to hear and receive the Word of God plainly spoken. A parable has been described as “an outward symbol of an inward reality”.

#### Par-a-ble:

- 1. A moral or religious story: a short simple story intended to illustrate a moral or religious lesson**
- 2. Bible story ascribed to Jesus Christ: a parable that appears in the Bible as told by Jesus Christ**

*“All things in Nature are prophetic outlines of Divine operations, God not merely speaking parables but doing them.”  
- Tertullian*

And Jesus was the master at drawing the power out of every parable He told.

*“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.” Romans 1:20*

To be successful, a parable must express the perfect harmony that exists between the natural and the spiritual world in narrative form, and must be true to nature or to human relationships. A parable should also impart meaningful spiritual truth to the mind of the hearer using material objects to express those spiritual truths. Parables reveal that nature is much more than what it seems. Through His parables, Jesus reveals the spiritual truth that this temporal world, which we do see, is in fact an exact picture and pattern of His spiritual, heavenly kingdom that we do not see. Both kingdoms operate according to a particular set of laws. Jesus’ parables are not mere mental imagery – window dressing for Divine instruction – but they are points of comparison to the spiritual kingdom of God, with nature bearing testimony to essential spiritual truths. *The Parables of the Kingdom*, we shall discover, are earthly in form, but heavenly in spirit.

Generally speaking, the word used for “parable” means “to set side by side,” and indicates the idea of comparing two distinct objects. A parable of the kingdom is literally placing beside for comparison, earthly truths with heavenly truths – a similitude, or an illustration of one subject to another. Heaven and Earth are the work of the One God. Parables act like mirrors that superimpose the reflected images of the visible, natural world God created over the invisible, supernatural kingdom of heaven, so that “those who have ears to hear” may

*“When our Lord appeared among men as a Teacher He took possession of the parable and honored it by making it His own, by using it as the vehicle for the highest truth of all.”  
Herbert Lockyer*

discover a deeper spiritual meaning to their existence, increase in intimacy with the Father and grow in faithful obedience to Jesus Christ who is “ the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (Col. 1:15).

Parables are a unique form of spiritual teaching in that they both attract and sift out those who hear them. Not everyone who came to listen to Jesus’ sermons was receptive to His words. Only those who had “eyes to see and ears to hear” – those who were genuinely drawn to God – would diligently dig and seek out the deeper spiritual meaning of a parable. A parable is intended to arouse the hearer to seek out the Lord of the parable, and have Him reveal the hidden meaning to him. Once the parable is fully understood, it is sure to be remembered long after the main body of the sermon is forgotten.

The parables Jesus used were designed to hold the attention of those who listened to Him, to excite their consciences, and to inspire them to respond in obedience to what they had heard and understood. Parables are reservoirs of truth, containing powerful word pictures. Using the language of symbols, Jesus, the Master Painter, composed these pictures, and created enduring images to communicate Divine truths that would be preserved and passed down from generation to generation.

It has been said that there are two extremes to be avoided in the interpretation of parables: one is to make *too much* of them – the other is to make *too little* of them. Although each parable contains a valuable lesson of a spiritual nature, not every word of the parable is charged with hidden meaning. All of the parables may be *for us*, but not everything within a parable is *about us*. It is essential to understand the parable within the context of the sermon, as well as within the broader, universal context of the *present reality* of the eternal Kingdom of

*“In these parables we can discern the unconquerable democracy of Christ’s Christianity as a manifestation of redeeming love in which the whole human race is included. By them the peoples of East and West are made aware of god’s fatherly love, transcendent grace, everlasting mercy, and inerrant justice.”*

*S.P. Cadman*

God, Jesus came to reveal. If we are transparent and sincere in our quest for truth about the kingdom of heaven, we can rely on the Holy Spirit to reveal to us Christ's intended meaning for each of His parables.



# *1. The Parables of the Kingdom*

*“Jesus said to them, ‘Have you understood all these things?’*

*They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.”*

*Then He said to them, ‘Therefore, every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.’”*

*Matthew 13:51, 52*

## INTRODUCTION

The parables, emblems and figures of speech used by the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry vary in number from commentary to commentary. Depending upon exactly how a parable is defined, the parables of Jesus number from twenty-five to seventy-five. In the strictest sense of this term used in Christian theology, they number about thirty. (As a point of reference, I have listed a total of thirty-one in Appendix A. Out of those parables I have identified thirteen for our study of the *Parables of the Kingdom*. In a way, it could be said that every parable Jesus spoke, either directly or indirectly related to the kingdom of God He came to reveal. Some commentaries have taken the words of Matthew 13:34 – “without a parable, He did not speak to them” – quite literally and have attempted to cast His entire oral ministry in parabolic form. However, only those parables that are clearly understood to be speaking directly about the kingdom of God will be examined in this study.

Jesus, the Master Preacher, was wise enough to recognize that men would not easily forget the principles of the kingdom He spoke of in His sermons if they were couched in the form that is the easiest and most surely remembered – that of the story parable. The kingdom parables have an enduring quality in that they not only relate to the people, places and things of the ancient world

*“In every age the parables prove their startling modernity. They are more recent than today’s newspaper; for a newspaper follows the fashion, and a fashion because it has become a fashion has begun to die. The parables utter the eternal verities by which all fashions, the shifting moods of an indifferent society, are judged. They are as recent as present breathing, as vivid in their tang as the ‘now’ of immediate experience. The preacher, therefore must handle the parables for they are, ‘spirit and life’.”*

*Dr. George A Buttrick*

of the Old and New Testaments, but they reflect the same world in which men live and suffer and are tempted today. These stories lift men's minds above their sordid ambitions, enlighten those who are ignorant of pure Christian religion, release those who are oppressed by social customs and the traditions of men, and turn the sinful back to God. These parables of the kingdom not only reveal the present reality of the kingdom Jesus brought to His disciples, but they reveal His compassion for the lost individuals who are today earnestly seeking God for salvation.

Many students of these parables have sought to discover a deeper symbolic, prophetic or eschatological meaning behind each and every word. However, perhaps the most practical way of understanding the parables of Jesus is to read them for their own merits, searching for what may be applied in our personal lives as citizens of God's kingdom. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus was concerned for those who came to Him, "like sheep without a shepherd." His teachings were intended to encourage and enlighten those who listened, and revealed principles of the kingdom that were intended to be applied to everyday life. The true worth of Jesus' parables do not depend upon some new and varied truths that we are able to extract from them, but their worth is found in their progressive and practical application of kingdom principles into our daily lives.

The parables Jesus spoke demonstrate that He was fully acquainted with the daily lives of the people all around Him. He understood the farmer who sowed the seed, dressed and tilled the earth, and reaped the harvest in its season. Jesus was at home with those who tended the vineyards; He knew their times of reaping the fruit of the vine, and of the fig tree. Jesus' parables showed that He

*"And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things."*

*Mark 6:34*

knew what a day's wage would bring, and that He could relate to those who had to work hard for a living. Jesus moved with ease between the rich and poor, royalty and paupers, Pharisees and tax collectors – the words of His parables were designed to communicate the principles of His kingdom to all people. No one is excluded from the kingdom of heaven, except for those who refused to believe and receive His offer of entrance into the kingdom.

#### WHY PARABLES?

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke record for us the beginning of Jesus' parabolic kingdom ministry. In Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8 and 13 we see a shift in Jesus' public sermons. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus greatly emphasized the importance of His words: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."* (John 5:24) The words of Jesus were as much an expression of His divinity as were His kingly miracles.

**Read Matthew 13:10; Mark 4:10; and Luke 8:9. How did the disciples respond as Jesus began to teach in parables?** \_\_\_\_\_

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The disciples' questions implied that they recognized Jesus was introducing a new and unexpected teaching method to the large crowds that came to hear Him speak.

*"But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, 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."*

*Matthew 13:16*

**Read Matthew 13:11-15, 34, 35; Mark 4:11, 12; & Luke 8:10. How did Jesus respond to the disciples' question, "Why parables now?"** \_\_\_\_\_

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Jesus explained to His followers that, on the one hand, He used the parables to reveal truth to some, but on the other hand, He used those same parables to hide truth from others. The fact that three of the gospel writers included Jesus' explanation of why He began to speak in parables highlights the significance and uniqueness of these *Parables of the Kingdom*.

**Read Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11; & Luke 8:10. What did Jesus say these parables were about?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What aspect of the kingdom was Jesus concerned for His followers to understand?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Psalm 25:14 says, "*The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.*" The Holy Spirit, through the church, reveals *the mysteries* of the gospel of the kingdom – including the

*"These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory."*

1 Timothy 3:14-16

plan of God's redemption for both Jew and Gentile through Jesus Christ. Paul stated it this way: *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written:*

*'Eye had not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the ear of man  
The things which God as prepared for those who love  
Him.'*

*But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." 1 Corinthians 2:7-10*

**Read Matthew 13:11-17; Mark 4:11, 12; & Luke 8:10.**

**Did Jesus intend for everyone in the crowds to understand the mysteries of the kingdom? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**What did Jesus say was the reason He did not intend for those who were on the outside of the kingdom to understand His teachings? \_\_\_\_\_**

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John the Baptist was at once, the last great prophet to the covenant nation of Israel and the forerunner who

*"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."  
Matthew 11:11*

marked the beginning of the new era of Christ. John's ministry was to prepare the people of Israel for the advent of their Messiah and to introduce them to the coming kingdom Christ would bring:

*“And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying:*

*‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
Prepare the way of the Lord;  
Make His paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled  
And every mountain and hill brought low;  
The crooked places shall be made straight  
And the rough ways smooth;  
And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”*

*– Matthew 3:3-6*

The fact that all four Gospel writers included accounts of John the Baptist's message and ministry to the children of Israel as Christ's forerunner means that we cannot underestimate the great importance of John's mission.

**Read Matthew 3:1-16; Mark 1:1-9; Luke 3:1-17, 21, 22 & John 1:15-34. In what way did John prepare the nation for the coming of the Messiah? \_\_\_\_\_**

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The Jordan River played a significant part in the life of the nation of Israel. So it was no accident that God called John the Baptist to deliver His message of

*“Behold, I send  
My messenger, and  
he will prepare the  
way before Me.  
And the Lord,  
whom you seek, will  
suddenly come to  
His temple, even  
the Messenger of  
the covenant, in  
whom you delight.  
Behold, He is  
coming.” Says the  
Lord of hosts.*

*Malachi 3:1*

repentance from dead works and spiritual renewal at this place and time (Note: the crossing of the Jordan River by the children of Israel under Joshua's leadership in Joshua 3:5, 6.

**Compare John the Baptist's teaching on true repentance (Matt. 3:8-10; Luke 3:8-14) with Jesus' teachings about entering the kingdom and living as a citizen of the kingdom from His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:13-27). Both John the Baptist and Jesus called people to much more than words or ritual for repentance; what must those who have been baptized and entered into the kingdom do? \_\_\_\_\_**

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John's baptism with water demonstrated the repentance, humility, and cleansing from sin the people needed to prepare themselves for the coming of the Messiah. This was the beginning of the spiritual process. Jesus' baptism with fire, fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, brought the power of the Holy Spirit to all believers to live and to proclaim the *gospel of the kingdom* Jesus inaugurated. Since John's baptism was a baptism for repentance from sin, why would Jesus ask to be baptized by John? Jesus never sinned, and yet when asked by John, "are you coming to me?" Jesus responded that He wanted to be baptized in order to "fulfill all righteousness." (Note Jesus' introduction to His teachings about the Law in the Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5:17.) Jesus intended to

*"They who are baptized with the Holy Ghost are baptized as with fire... is fire enlightening? So the Spirit is a Spirit of illumination. Is it warming? And do not their hearts burn within them? Is it consuming? And does not the Spirit of judgment, as a spirit of burning, consume the dross of their corruptions? Does fire make all it seizes like itself? And does it move upwards? So does the Spirit make the soul holy like itself, and its tendency is heavenward. Christ says I am come to send fire..."*

*Matthew Henry*

“fulfill” (Greek: *pleroo*, “to make full”) the righteous requirement of water baptism for all who came before Him and for all who would follow after Him until the end of the age. When He emerged from the waters of the Jordan River, Jesus set out on a new phase of His ministry that would involve the public proclamation of the *gospel of the kingdom*, and the private teaching and training of His disciples, preparing them for that day when He would return to the Father, and send the Holy Spirit to His church to lead them and guide them until His return at the end of the age.

## II. JESUS AUTHENTICATES HIS MINISTRY TO THE NATION BY HIS MIRACLES

*“From that time, Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” Matthew 4:17*

Through His public proclamation of the coming of the kingdom, Jesus offered Himself as the Messiah the nation of Israel was waiting and hoping for. In His *kingdom sermons* Jesus taught that God’s people must acknowledge His authority and accept Him as the One who fulfilled the Old Testament Law and prophetic revelation of the King of the Jews, or else they would continue down the wrong pathway marked out for them by the traditions taught by the scribes and the Pharisees. During this period, Christ told very few parables, but instead allowed His miracles to speak for Him.

*“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.”  
Matthew 9:35*

**Read Matthew chapters 8-11. Note how Jesus’ miracles were the visible stamp authenticating Him as the one who spoke with divine authority. How did**

**those who witnessed Jesus' miracles react Him and to His offer of the kingdom He said was "at hand"? (Note the individuals who experienced the miracles, the crowds around them, John's disciples, and the religious authorities.) \_\_\_\_\_**

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Everywhere Jesus went people came to Him who were afflicted with every kind of sickness and disease – along with those who were tormented and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics – and He healed them all. The crowds who followed Jesus were impressed by His miracles, but when it came time to commit themselves to Him, they wavered. As Jesus saw the multitudes continuing to come forward, He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Matt. 9:37. 38; Luke 10:2; & John 4:35-37).

Those who saw Jesus' healings, yet would not commit themselves to Him, were joined by the scribes, Pharisees and teachers of the law who were the religious “watchdogs” over the people. Also in the crowds were the priests, the keepers of Temple worship in Jerusalem who were the self-appointed “holy men” and the religious police who made sure everyone in Judea knew their place in society and kept it. All but a handful of these religious leaders openly resisted Jesus' influence over the multitudes that came to listen to His sermons on the *gospel of the kingdom* and to be healed. Jesus' confrontations with these religious leaders over their

*“The unbelief of Israel's leaders on this occasion anticipated that nation's ultimate rejection of Christ that would culminate in His death on the cross.”*

*J. Dwight Pentecost*



misinterpretations of the law and of the Sabbath became increasingly open and hostile. Although they saw His many miracles and knew the Scriptures concerning the coming of the Messiah, they still demanded of Jesus, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you” (Matt. 12:38). Compounding their unbelief was their blasphemous accusation that Jesus used Satanic power to cast out demons. **It was in this context that Jesus began to teach in parables.**

The multitudes and the religious leaders would not respond to His authority and commit themselves to the kingdom of heaven from the plain talk in His sermons or by His authenticating miracles. Now it was time to speak in parables so that “outsiders” and “the rest” – those who refused to believe – would not be able to hear or understand *the mysteries of the kingdom* Jesus wanted his disciples to hear and understand.

**Read Matthew 12:15-21 and compare that passage with Acts 13:44-48 and Romans 9:22-33. to whom is the kingdom of God now being offered? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Jesus’ offer to establish the Davidic form of the Messianic Kingdom at this point in Israel’s history ends at this pivotal moment in His ministry. Matthew turns to the prophetic word of Isaiah to communicate to the Jew that fact and to confirm that the kingdom of God was now open to the Gentile nations.

The twelfth chapter of Matthew contains Jesus’ rebuke of the leaders of the Jewish nation who accused Him of being in league with the devil and then demanded another sign from Him before they would accept His

*“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh – who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands – that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”*

*Ephesians 2:11-13*

authority to speak to the nation. Jesus' words in Matthew 12 echo those of John the Baptist when John warned the leaders, "even now the axe is laid to the root of the tree."

**After all that Jesus had said and done in the presence of the multitudes, would one more sign convince them that He was indeed the promised Messiah? Read Matthew 12:39, 40; what one last sign would be offered to the nation of Israel that Jesus was indeed the Son of God? \_\_\_\_\_**

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This sad chapter in Israel's history ends with what on the surface seems to be a rejection of His own family, but it is in fact a prophetic utterance that revealed the basis for communal ties with Jesus in the kingdom of heaven: "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:50) From this time forward, Jesus would only explain His teachings to His true family. For those on the outside of Jesus' kingdom, the events that were about to unfold in Jerusalem (the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son of God) would remain a mystery, only to be revealed with power on the Day of Pentecost: "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this, which you now see and hear... Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:32, 33, 36)

*"However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."*

*1 Corinthians 2:6-8*

## *II. The Key Parable: “The Sower and the Soils”*

*Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?’*

*Mark 4:13.*

The die was cast. The nation of Israel would not submit to their King. They had seen His miracles and had listened to His sermons, but still they would not believe. So Jesus started down the road that would lead Him to Calvary; the first step was to narrow His message to only those who were willing to listen and obey His teaching on the kingdom of God: “... many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. (John 2:23b – 25) Jesus from this time forward would only address His true family: “For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:35) Jesus commanded His disciples after His resurrection to go into the entire world and preach the Good News, but the mysteries of the kingdom are reserved only for those who have committed themselves fully to the King of kings.

In this opening parable of the sower, Jesus reveals to His disciples and to all spiritual “sowers” who would come after them (the teachers, preachers, missionaries and evangelists) why not everyone who hears *this gospel of the kingdom* will respond to it. Matthew, Mark and Luke each record a slight variation of this key parable. **Read Matthew 13:3-9, & 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, & 13-20; Luke 8:5-8, & 11-15. On a separate sheet of paper write a**

*“Both in the natural and the spiritual realms, God works majestically alone, and as the Sower, is untiring in His task. He knows full well that although much seed falls by the wayside, ultimately, a great harvest will be His when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and Christ.”*

*Herbert Lockyer*

**harmony (a comparative outline) of the parable of the sower and its interpretation using all three Gospel accounts. There are three key elements in this parable: the sower, the seed and the soils. Note the verses where each element is mentioned.**

#### THE SOWER

**Read Jeremiah 31:27, 28; Hosea 2:23; Zechariah 10:9 & Matthew 13:37. Who is the sower referred to in this parable? \_\_\_\_\_**

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The Scriptures speak of the Father and the Son as kingdom sowers, and indirectly of the Holy Spirit as the sower. The Holy Spirit is the “Divine Wind” that lifts and scatters the sons of the kingdom throughout the world, “*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit*” (John 3:8). As the “Spirit of truth,” He sows the seed of the word into the hearts of men. “*He will take of what is Mine,*” Jesus said, “*and declare it to you*” (John 16:14).

Every Christian should be a sower. It is not just the clergy who are ministers of the Word, but every believer is called by the Spirit, qualified by the grace of God, and endowed with spiritual gifts and talents that enable them to fulfill their solemn responsibility as sowers of the kingdom “to the ends of the earth.” Christian parents, Sunday school teachers, lay preachers, and Bible tract distributors share the same responsibility for the Great Commission of making disciples as do the Apostles, prophets, priests and seminary graduates. All the sower

*“Those who sow  
in tears shall reap  
in joy. He who  
continually goes  
forth weeping,  
bearing seed for  
sowing, shall  
doubtless come  
again with rejoicing  
bringing his sheaves  
with him.”*

*Psalm 126:5, 6*

has to do is sow; it is beyond his power to make the seed grow.

#### THE SEED

**Read Matthew 13:19 & Luke 8:11. What is the seed Jesus is referring to in this parable? \_\_\_\_\_**

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The seed is the word – not just any word, but *the word of the kingdom* (“Now this is the word by which the gospel was reached to you,” Peter would later write). The sower casting his seed into the field is increasing not wasting it, for he sows his field with good seed, knowing it will produce a rich harvest in time.

**Read 1 Peter 1:23-25; Romans 1:16, 10:14, 15; and Colossians 1:3-6. What do these verses tell us of the seed and how we sow it? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Sowers of the kingdom, shamelessly and liberally cast the imperishable Word of *this gospel of the kingdom* into the hearts of men. Knowing that this good seed may not penetrate the hearts of everyone, the sower presses on notwithstanding the disappointments, because he or she understands that once “the word of truth of the gospel” is received into the ready heart, it will bring forth out of the fields of this world a rich harvest for the kingdom of heaven.

*“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”*

*Isaiah 55:10, 11*

THE SOILS

Read Matthew 13:3-9; Mark 4:3-8; & Luke 8:5-8.

Identify the four soils mentioned in this parable.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Using your harmony of the parable of the sower, combine all three accounts of Jesus' explanation of this parable and describe each of the soils. For example: "These are the ones who receive the word where it is sown by *the wayside*: they hear the word of the kingdom, but do not understand it. Then the wicked one (Satan, the devil) comes and immediately takes (snatches away) out of their hearts, the word that was sown, lest they should believe and be saved." Follow this example for each of the four soils mentioned in this parable.

FOR DISCUSSION

Once you have completed this exercise of combining Jesus' explanations of the soils, describe how this parable of the sower helps you to understand the responses of those who hear *this gospel of the kingdom* preached to them. \_\_\_\_\_

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*"While we may get discouraged that our evangelistic efforts are not producing the fruit we would like, we can be encouraged that God is working in the harvest and that it will be a rich harvest. The emphasis in the parable is not on the soils but on the harvest. In spite of failures, setbacks, and even persecution, there will be an abundant harvest for those who remain faithful to God."*  
Rodney L. Cooper

As we meditate upon the meaning of the Parable of the Sower and the Soils, we should be moved and strive not only to be fruitful, but also to sow generously the seed of the word of the kingdom if we are to expect an abundant harvest to the glory of God. The parable reminds us to pay close attention to the conditions and attitudes of the hearts of our hearers. We are not to be discouraged when anyone does not understand God's word plainly spoken to him or her, since their heart may have become too hard to receive the good seed sown upon it. And like seed sown on the path, it will be trampled down, allowing Satan to snatch away the truth before it has chance to be received. It warns us not to take for granted those who immediately receive the "good news" with joy and gladness, since underneath the surface of the heart there may be stoney places of rebellion or resistance to the fullness of God's truth; those stoney places attract the heat of judgment and/or persecution and if those rocks are left undisturbed they will cause the Holy Spirit to evaporate like moisture in rocky soil. This parable also warns us to watch out for those worldly entanglements that tend to choke out the word of the kingdom before it reaches maturity and our spiritual life becomes fruitless. Finally, through this parable Jesus gives us a vision of encouragement and strength to persevere in our sowing, knowing that the good seed of this gospel of the kingdom sown into a good heart, well-prepared by the work of the Holy Spirit will produce an abundant harvest for the Lord, some thirty, some sixty and some one hundred fold.

*"For this reason we...  
do not cease to pray  
for you, and to ask  
that you may be filled  
with the knowledge  
of His will in all  
wisdom and spiritual  
understanding: that  
you may walk worthy  
of the Lord, fully  
pleasing Him, being  
fruitful in every good  
work and increasing  
in the knowledge of  
God..."*  
*Colossians 1:9, 10*



### III. "The Wheat and Tares"

"Another parable he put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field...'" Matthew 13:24

Once again Jesus illustrates a divine principle of the kingdom using the familiar elements of a sower, seed and soil. Central to this parable is the spiritual conflict between good and evil – between God and Satan – and the separation of the evil from the good that must take place at the end of the age.

**Read Matthew 13:24-30 and 13:37-43. Using Jesus' explanation of the parable in verses 37-43, identify the following elements in this story:**

1. **The one who sowed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. **The field:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. **The good seed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. **The tares:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. **The enemy:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. **The harvest:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. **The harvesters:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In this parable Jesus clearly identifies the field as the world. As the Psalmist wrote: "The Earth is the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. (24:1)

*"It is not easy to learn that the planter or the waterer is nothing at all, and that God is all. Let us think of ourselves only as God's instruments, and in a humble way as God's fellow-workers. It is a most helpful thought.*

*Constantly when engaged in tilling the soil as evangelists or in building character as preachers and teachers, let us count on success because of the power of our great Partner. He must give the policy and direction; it is our part to conform wholly to his will and guidance."*  
F. B. Meyer

It has been taught by some that this parable applies to the church and is used by them to teach us that we are not to try to purify the church, “lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.” However, Jesus clearly identifies the field in this parable as “the world” and not the church. Therefore, “the sons of the kingdom” in this parable are the church, the *ecclesia* – the “called out” ones, sown in the world (but not “of it” – John 17:15-19) by the Son of Man who claims ownership over the world He has created.

It is true that Christians are called to “love one another” (John 15:17); and to “...be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). And we ought to seek to create an accepting and welcoming church, but not at the expense of tolerating “the sons of the wicked one” in our midst.

As God’s elect, holy and loved by God, we are called to “put on” the character of Christ “... tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another... even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do” (Colossians 3:12, 13). We know there will always be some in the kingdom of God who are immature and fruitless now, but with patience, perseverance, and by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, they will one day prove to be “wheat” and will fulfill their kingdom purpose, producing a rich harvest to the Glory of the Lord.

Another immediate point of the parable was not lost upon Jesus’ disciples: to contrast the unexpected and expected forms of the kingdom of heaven. The Old Testament prophets envisioned a time when the righteous would inhabit an earthly kingdom established military

*“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”*

*2 Timothy 2:24-26*

power and governed by the Jewish Messiah. The unrighteous would be removed at the outset of this messianic kingdom, leaving only the faithful sons of Abraham to enjoy this time of peace and prosperity. **Read Matthew 20:20-28. How did the mother’s request fit into this expected form of the kingdom? How did Jesus’ response contrast with that expectation?**

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The unexpected element of the kingdom revealed in the *Parable of the Wheat and Tares* is that the time of separation of the righteous from the unrighteous in the world has yet to come. The separation of the good from the evil comes not at the beginning of this kingdom’s age, but at its end. Therefore, Jesus was saying, the “sons of the kingdom” must prevail in the world alongside the “sons of the wicked one” until the end of the age when He comes to reign over the new heaven and the new earth.

Finally, we can rest assured that the great Lord of the harvest, the Son of Man is not unaware of what is going on in the world. God is in control and is keeping watch over His harvest field. When the time for the harvest season comes – and come it will – at the Lord’s command, the tares will be gathered and meet their fiery end, and then *“the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”*

*“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.’”*

*Revelation 12:10-12*

## IV. "The Growing Seed"

*"And He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground...'" Mark 4:26*

Like a small jewel hidden in the cluster of gems ornamenting a royal diadem, the parable of "The Growing Seed" is discovered only in Mark's parables of the kingdom, and could be easily overlooked as it falls between the key parable of "The Sower and the Soils" and the parable of "The Mustard Seed" found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But, the Holy Spirit impressed upon Mark to include this short parable taught by Jesus, illustrating yet another aspect of the nature of God's kingdom.

**Read Mark 4:26-29. Notice the parable bypasses all the details about plowing, soil preparation, irrigation, weeding, or fertilizing – all normal activities of the farmer. What are the only two activities of the farmer mentioned in this parable? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Where does this parable place the emphasis for the growth and productivity of the seed sown on the ground? \_\_\_\_\_**

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As in the previous parables, Jesus spoke using the familiar terms of *sower, seed, and soil* to reveal certain truths concerning fruitfulness in the kingdom of God. The sower sows the seed. Jesus is the Master Sower in whose

*"The fruit is the result of the seed; the end is implicit in the beginning. The infinitely great is already active in the infinitely small"*  
*Jeremías*

*"Those who share the work of their Lord for the Kingdom should also share His optimism. He did not despair for mankind, neither should we."*  
*S. Parkes Cadman*

footsteps every preacher, teacher, missionary and evangelist follows. It is the responsibility of the citizens of His kingdom to sow generously the good seed of *this gospel of the kingdom* wherever they walk upon this earth. Once the seed is sown, what produces the harvest?

Here Jesus reminds His disciples that the harvest is not dependent upon the skill, determination, diligence, or wisdom of the sower; growth occurs whether the sower is awake or asleep, or whether the sower understands or is unaware of the process of growth. The seed, by its very God-given nature, of itself produces the grain. Those who sow the seed of the Word must not become discouraged if they do not see immediate results, for the Spirit of life is at work in the seed's germination, growth, development and ripening process; it does the sower of the seed no good to pace back and forth in the field, worrying or fretting over the process. Once the life within the seed has reproduced itself in the new grain, then the laborers will be called by the Lord of the harvest to participate in the harvest.

This parable was given to remind those who sow the Word that it is not the eloquence of their preaching, the persuasiveness of their evangelism, the effectiveness of their teaching, or the commitment to their mission that produces the harvest; all good sowers must sow the Word of God in reverence, knowing that while human agencies may disseminate the Word of God, the fruitfulness of the harvest comes from the indestructible life and power of the Word itself, not from the human agent. Citizens of the kingdom continue to sow in faith knowing the victory is sure; the time of harvest is rapidly approaching, and will surely arrive at the very moment predestined in God's eternal plan. Then the kingdom will be revealed in all of its splendor.

*“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”*

## V. *“The Mustard Seed”*

*“Another parable He put forth to them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field...’” Matthew 13:31*

In any serious study of the kingdom of God, it is important to distinguish between the “kingdom” and the “church”. The kingdom Jesus speaks about is that invisible spiritual kingdom; it is this kingdom that Jesus came to inaugurate, and it is the gospel of this kingdom that He commanded to be preached to the ends of the earth. The kingdom of heaven is the living organism, the life and spirit of the church; it is the eternal, invisible, spiritual church, present throughout history but hidden and mysterious until revealed by the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit. The church is also an organization; it is the external, visible, physical church established with power on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and expanding to reach every tribe, every tongue and every nation in the world.

If the *church* and the *kingdom* are confused, it can cause one to misinterpret Scripture and lead to major errors in doctrine to be formed. Many honest and sincere Christians have misinterpreted the *kingdom* as the organized church, and have sought to establish Christian theocracies using temporal power. Armies have been raised, and battles fought to establish “Christian” Empires; emperors, kings, princes, and popes have wielded dictatorial powers throughout church history in vain attempts to build the kingdom of heaven here on earth. All of these attempts have failed, often bringing guilt and shame upon humble men and women of God and scorn upon the precious name of Christ. This “Parable of

*“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.”*  
*Hebrews 12:22, 23*

the Mustard Seed” and the following “Parable of the Leaven” can easily be misinterpreted if we lose the distinction between *church* and *kingdom* in the word of God.

**Read Matthew 13:31, 32; Mark 4:30, 31; and Luke 13:18, 19. On a separate sheet of paper write a harmony of the parable the same way you wrote the harmony of “The Parable of the Sower and the Soils” using all three accounts. Note the three key elements of the parable: the *seed*, the *branches*, and the *birds*.**

Before beginning, it is important to recognize that Matthew, Mark and Luke all make it clear in their introductions to this parable that Jesus was speaking specifically of the *kingdom* of God: “... *To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it?*”

**THE SEED**

Using your harmony, how did Jesus describe the mustard seed? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Read Matthew 17:20 and Luke 17:6. What does the size of the mustard seed say about the relationship of size, strength, and importance to its effect in the kingdom of heaven? (Note: Matthew 19:30, 18:2-5; Luke 7:28, and 9:48) \_\_\_\_\_**

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*“... For assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.”*

*Matthew 17:20b*



The minute size of the mustard seed had become proverbial long before Jesus used it to describe His kingdom. At this time, the mustard seed was considered the smallest discernable weight that could be weighed in a balance. Because of its size, the seed came to symbolize small beginnings, and the smallest measurable particle. From the previous parables of the kingdom it is easy to discern in this parable that it is “the Son of Man” who sowed the mustard seed on the ground.

**Using your harmony of “The Parable of the Mustard Seed”, describe the place where the seed is sown.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew, Mark and Luke all use different terms to describe where the mustard seed is sown. How does each term enhance our understanding of how “the Son of Man” views the world in which the mustard seed is sown?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Prompted by the Holy Spirit, each author recalled a slightly different term for the place where the mustard seed was sown. To the casual listener, these accounts may seem contradictory, but for those who have “ears to hear” the Holy Spirit is adding to the understanding of the kingdom without altering the primary meaning of the parable. Like “The Parable of the Sower and the Soils”, the seed of the kingdom is sown on the ground. But it is

*“Ours is not the task to Christianize society and assist in the development of a great tree springing out of the least of all seeds. Grace must be ours to keep out of our life that which is contrary to the purpose and spirit of the Master. Loftiness, pride, mastery, love of prominence and position are adverse to the character of Him who humbled Himself. The fowls of the air must not be given lodgment in the tree of our life.”*  
*Herbert Lockyer*

not just any ground upon which this seed is sown: the ground is in His field. And as in “The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares”, the field is the world over which the Lord claims ownership and authority. But Luke adds something a little more to the picture: the field is also a garden. And as the term implies, the garden is a place of beauty and utility; it is a place that is well tended and cared for by the one who owns it. A garden is a place that is sheltered, protected and nurtured by the gardener. Because it is given special care, the garden is also expected to produce a better and richer crop than the same seed sown out in the fields. So it is in the kingdom of God: “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:48b)

#### THE BRANCHES

**Read Daniel 4:10-12; Ezekiel 17:22-24; and Isaiah 11:1, 2. Compare these verses with the “Parable of the Mustard Seed.” Jesus knew that these passages of Scripture were familiar to His audience and that the image of the mustard seed growing into a great tree would be related to the messianic kingdom of Old Testament prophecy. How do these passages of Scripture reinforce the idea of the bounty and expanse of the kingdom of heaven Jesus was trying to communicate to His audience in this parable?**

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*“Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.’”*

*Luke 13:7-9*

## THE BIRDS

The kingdom heaven Jesus spoke of must have seemed weak and insignificant to those who first heard this parable. How could Jesus' small band followers compare with the mighty armies of the Empire of Rome? And yet within a few years those few would be empowered by the Spirit to go forward and preach *this gospel of the kingdom* everywhere, turning the whole world upside down (Acts 17:6) in the process. The tiny seed of the kingdom sown by the Son of Man at the dawning of the church age has become a great tree that today provides shelter and rest for people of every nation throughout the world. And still it keeps growing as the citizens of His kingdom continue to obey His commandment and preach the Good News of the kingdom throughout the whole earth.

### *Vl. "The Leaven"*

*"And again He said, 'To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.'" Luke 13:20, 21*

When interpreting the Parables of the Kingdom, it is important to understand that the meanings of the types and symbols Jesus used to convey His messages are not to be treated like rigid mathematical formulas. Sometimes a number used in Scripture is just a number, and is not intended to convey a deep symbolic, spiritual meaning. Sometimes a bird is just a bird, a rock is just a rock, and a loaf of bread is just a loaf. As was stated near the beginning of our study of these parables, there are two extremes to be avoided in the interpretation of parables:

#### **Bible Types:**

**A *type* is a word-picture that is unique to the Bible. A *type* is very similar to a parable in that both use the symbolism found in object lessons of this life to communicate spiritual truths, and reveal truth by comparing one thing to another.**

**However, a type has several distinctive features. First, it must be a specific and precise picture of the person or thing it represents. Second, it must be of Divine origin or appointment. And third, it must prefigure or predict someone or something in the future.**

one is to make too much of them – the other is to make too little of them. How someone understands the use of Bible *types* and how strictly they apply the symbolism found in them can greatly affect the meanings and interpretations of some of the Parables of the Kingdom. The meaning of The Parable of the Leaven is an extreme example of how far apart interpretations of the same Scripture can be.

**Read Exodus 12:15; Leviticus 2:11; Matthew 16:5-12; and 1 Corinthians 5:6-8. How is leaven described and what is its spiritual meaning? \_\_\_\_\_**

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In His Parable of the Leaven Jesus says, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven...” Leaven (or yeast) everywhere it is used in Scripture as a *type* is always compared to sin, or evil teachings, evil doctrines, or evil practices. The gospel is never called leaven. Leaven, then, is something to be cast out or put away as an unclean thing. How then can Jesus compare the kingdom of God to an unclean thing? Those who insist upon applying this typology to this parable of the kingdom explain that in this case, leaven must be a type of the evil doctrines that would be taught by the apostate church; the woman in the parable is the apostate church; and the meal is the Word of God.

*“And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the Lord.”*

*Leviticus 23:15-17*

Those who bear in mind the idea that the church is separate from the kingdom in Jesus' teachings do not accept the interpretation that the Parable of the Leaven is intended to teach that the kingdom would be corrupted. The kingdom of God is the indestructible, incorruptible, everlasting reign and rule of Christ – present, yet invisible throughout the whole earth. Since Jesus was comparing a specific aspect of His kingdom to the natural process of yeast permeating a large quantity of dough, it may be possible to accept the interpretation that His emphasis was upon **the way** the kingdom works internally in the lives of His disciples.

Like the man who scattered seed on the ground in the Parable of the Growing Seed, the woman by mixing leaven in the measures of meal started a process that she knew would produce the desired results, and like a seed growing in the ground, the process of leavening was something she had no control over. Once the leaven is added, the process is:

- Irreversible
- Pervasive
- Persistent
- Uninterrupted

All the work remains unseen until the mixture is ready for the oven.

From this simple illustration of leaven, Jesus taught that when the life of the kingdom is received into the heart of a person, it begins a process of inner transformation that works persistently, pervasively, and irreversibly until the whole person is made new.

*“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2*

*Corinthians 3:18*

*“Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end. The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You.”*

*Psalms 102:25-28*

## VII. *“The Hidden Treasure” and “The Pearl”*

*Matthew 13:44*

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for the joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”*

*Matthew 13:45, 46*

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”*

Only Matthew records the parables of the Hidden Treasure and The Pearl. The Lord presents these two parables together in order to teach the same lesson, but from slightly different perspectives. Jesus used perspective to add depth and dimension to His message. But here again, the interpretations of these parables vary greatly depending upon how the interpreter defines the key elements found in each one.

Some Bible expositors present the treasure and the pearl in these parables as the church, and others define them as meaning Christ Himself. It is true and accurate to point to the Lord as the one who paid the purchase price of our redemption. It is also true that the church has been “chosen” by God and is precious in His sight (1 Peter 2:4). At the same time, those of us who have been saved from the lake of fire reserved for the wicked at the end of the age (Rev. 20:15) cannot underestimate the value of Christ. As the pearl of great price, we see in Him the redemption we have through His blood and the forgiveness of our sins, “according to the riches

*“For you are a holy  
people to the Lord  
your God; the Lord  
your God has  
chosen you to be a  
people for Himself, a  
special treasure  
above all the peoples  
of the earth.*

*Deut. 7:6*

of His Grace” (Eph. 1:7).

However, if we apply the sound principles of biblical hermeneutics, examined in the Forward to part one of our study, “The Kingdom Sermons”, we must conclude from these verses that Jesus was not speaking directly about the church or about Himself. Staying within the context of the verses immediately preceding and following verses 44-46, and staying within the context of the verses themselves, one must conclude that the subject of these parables is *the kingdom of heaven*, and that the hidden treasure and the pearl are the kingdom:

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like...” (verse 44)

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like...” (verse 45)

Beginning with The Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13 and concluding with the Parable of the Dragnet in Matthew 14:47-50, Jesus is teaching His disciples some very basic, yet very profound principles upon which His heavenly kingdom operates. **Staying within the context of the kingdom and using Scripture to verify Scripture, read Matthew 13:44-46 again. Then read Psalm 119:162; Prov. 15:6; Matt. 6:21; Matt. 19:21; Luke 12:31-34; & Luke 18:29, 30. What do these verses tell of us of the value of the kingdom of God compared with the things this world has to offer?**

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*“Men and women are redeemed, under God, by resolute defenders of His cause who reckon all else refuse so that they may gain Christ, and inherit in Him the unsearchable riches of love, justice and brotherhood symbolized by these parables. Those who accept their mandate shall stand at God’s right hand when earth’s wealth and whatever it can procure are as though they had never been.”*  
*S. Parks Cadman*

Jesus asked this question of the multitudes that began to follow Him: “*which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it?*” *Luke 14:28*

**Read Luke 9:23-25; 12:32-34; 13:22-24; 14:25-33; 16:13 and 18:18-30. In the parables of The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl, each man had to sell, give up, and let go of everything they owned in order to purchase something unexpected they discovered that was worth any price to possess. Using these parables and the Scriptures from Luke, what does Jesus say about the cost of being a citizen of His kingdom? \_\_\_\_\_**

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It is Jesus Christ who offers the treasure and the pearl to those who are engaged in the activities of life. Some people are on a quest – like the merchant, diligently seeking something of rare beauty that gives meaning and value to life. Others are simply going about their daily routines, not imagining there is anything more to this life than more toil and drudgery. Then something unexpected happens and Jesus presents each of them with a priceless treasure – the kingdom of heaven – and the opportunity to possess it.

Only those who recognize the true worth of the Kingdom will be able to freely surrender whatever is required to purchase it. To all outside of the kingdom, such sacrifices are foolishness.

*“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ...”*

*Phil. 3:7, 8*

## VIII. "The Dragnet"

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind..." Matt. 13:47*

The Parable of the Dragnet is another parable that is unique to Matthew's Gospel. Like The Parable of the Wheat and Tares, it also speaks of the "end of the age" (vs. 49). The pictures Jesus painted with His parables were not always sweet and cheerful. The nature of uncompromised truth is that it must reveal the dark shadows as well as the light.

**Review Lesson 3 of this study, The Wheat and Tares. Then read Matthew 13:47-50. Compare the two parables and note the similarities between them. \_\_\_\_\_**

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The Parable of the Wheat and Tares takes place on the earth, while the backdrop for the Parable of the Dragnet is on the sea. However, in both parables the world is the implied meaning. Both parables deal with the existence of good and evil; both foretell a time in the future when the wicked will be separated from the just; and both describe the ultimate demise of the wicked.

There is one very important difference between these two parables that must not be overlooked. While the Parable of the Wheat and Tares addresses the existence of "the sons of the kingdom" alongside the "sons of the evil one" in this world, The Parable of the Dragnet speaks of the separation of the wicked from the just after both have been drawn out of the same sea.

*"The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."*

*Rev 20:13-15*

There are five key elements in this parable that move the story forward to the inevitable close of this age and the judgment that is to follow:

1. The net
2. The sea
3. The fishermen
4. The fish
5. The angels

Let us examine each one.

### 1. THE NET

Although not all of the men Jesus called to be His disciples were fishermen, all were familiar with the trade that was essential to the life and economy of Galilee. The *net* Jesus spoke of in this parable was used daily by fishermen in the Sea of Galilee. **Read Matthew 4:18 and Luke 5:1-7.** The dragnet was a special net of great length, weighted at the bottom, and designed to sweep to the depths of the sea and gather in a large mass of fish of all kinds. The dragnet is not designed to be selective. Only after the catch is hauled ashore are the fish caught in its mesh sorted between the good and the bad.

**Read Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17; and Luke 5:10. Then read Acts 2:40, 41; 4:1-4; 5:14, 41; 8:4-6; 9:31-35; 10:44-47; 11:19-21; 13:48, 49; 14:21, 22; 16:31-34; 17:1-4; 18:8; 28:28-30. Describe how the dragnet relates to the proclamation and presentation of the Gospel since the beginning of the Church age. \_\_\_\_\_**

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*"The ordinances, the preaching of the Gospel, its ministrations, its means of grace, are the outspread and comprehensive net... none so deep that it does not descend to them, none so high that it does not reach them, none so bad that they are cast out, none so good that they are passed by; it collects good and bad."*

*John Cumming*



## 2. THE SEA

Throughout Scripture the image of the sea is used as a type. *Sea* may be used to represent extremely difficult problems and situations that arise in the path of God's people – situations that are impossible to overcome apart from the Lord's intervention (Ps. 18:16-19). The sea may also be a figure of the many blessings and abundant benefits that God gives to those who faithfully walk with Him – like the waves of the sea, they keep coming and coming without ceasing.

**Read 1 Chron. 16:31, 32; Is. 17:12, 13; Rev. 12:12; 17:15 and compare them with the image of the *sea* in the Parable of the Dragnet. What is the intended meaning of the *sea* in the Parable of the Dragnet? \_\_\_\_\_**

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The *sea* in this parable represents all the nations of the world, both Jew and Gentile. It is into this sea of humanity that the Gospel net is cast, to the Jew first and then the Gentile (Rom. 1:16). This parable describes the gathering together of some “out of every tribe, and tongue, and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9). It is also important to note that the net did not enclose **all** the fish in the sea, but gathered out of the sea “some of every kind” of fish. It is an unfortunate fact of life that not all those who have the privilege of hearing this glorious Gospel preached to them will respond and be drawn into the kingdom of heaven.

## 3. THE FISHERMEN

**Read Mark 1:16-20 and Luke 5:4-11. What were**

*“Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”*

*Isaiah 48:18*

**these men doing when Jesus called them? Note Moses (Ex. 3:1), David (1 Sam. 16:11), Elisha (1 Kings 19:19), and Amos (Amos 7:14). What does the selection of these men tell us about who God calls? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Jesus' first disciples were fishermen by trade. He called them with these simple words: "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." Jesus did not go to the religious leaders, the intellectuals or to the social elites of His day to draw His first disciples to Himself. He found in these men the kind of courage and decisiveness that would be necessary characteristics for those He would disciple and entrust to carry this Gospel of the Kingdom to the depths of the sea and to the ends of the earth.

#### 4. THE FISH

**Read Is. 35:8; Matt. 22:9; and Luke 14:23. What do these verses tell us about how far and wide the Lord commands us to go to bring others into His kingdom? Should we be disappointed when we do not get the response we would like or when some who respond turn out not to be sincere? \_\_\_\_\_**

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*"People may be religious yet not regenerated, baptized yet never washed in the blood of Christ; professors yet not possessors. In spite of religious affiliations and desires, if the heart is destitute of the grace of God, then the soul is lost."*

*Herbert Lockyer*

The fish drawn out of the sea were of every kind, both good and bad. The “good and bad” takes us back to the Wheat and Tares growing together in the same field. The workers in the field were not responsible for there being tares among the wheat, and here it should be no reflection on the fishermen or their skill that they brought in a mixed haul. The nature of the Dragnet is to sweep as wide a path as possible to bring all it will hold to the shore.

## 5. THE ANGELS

God calls us to be “fishers of men” and to be occupied with preaching and teaching *This Gospel of the Kingdom*. Our participation in the work of the Kingdom is to draw all men and women to Christ and “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). The Lord also commands us to teach those who have entered into His kingdom to obey all of His commands (Matt. 28:20). Disciples of Jesus Christ are not charged with the duty of “casting out” or “weeding out” those we judge as unfit for the Kingdom.

**Read Matt. 7:1-6 and 13:28, 29. Why does Jesus instruct us not to try to sort out the “good” from the “bad”?** \_\_\_\_\_

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The commandments of Jesus to turn the other cheek and to “love your enemies” (Matt. 5:38-48) may well be the most difficult of all His commands to obey – especially when we observe so many who call themselves Christians, causing problems and bringing disrepute upon the name of Christ by their behaviors. But the agape love of God demands we be

*“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”*

*2 Peter 2:1*

patient and “ perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” It is a terrible and awesome responsibility to separate the good from the bad, the wicked from the righteous, and to pronounce eternal judgment upon anyone’s soul. This is a responsibility that is not given to men, but is reserved for only God and His appointed angels at the End of the Age.

Jesus’ Parable of the Dragnet and other passages of Scripture like Daniel 12:1-3 and Revelation 20:11-15 give us the assurance that at the End of the Age there will be no mistakes in judgment of who is “good” or “wheat” and who is “bad” or “tare”.

## *IX. “The Unforgiving Servant”*

*“Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.”  
Matthew 18:23*

### FORGIVENESS IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

#### **Read Matthew 18:21, 22.**

This parable is told in response to Peter’s direct question to the Lord about forgiveness. At the heart of Peter’s question was “how many times must I forgive someone to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law?” Although there was no specific Commandment in the Old Testament Law requiring someone to forgive another, there were many laws concerning restitution for an injured party and specific sacrifices that were required to be made by the guilty party in order to bring reconciliation with God.

The Jewish religious leaders often debated this issue. All would agree that the depth of Joseph’s forgiveness of his brothers (Gen. 50:7) was a model of human forgiveness, and the Old Testament Scriptures were overflowing with examples

*“Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’”*

*Revelation 11:15*

of God’s forgiveness of sinners, but what about forgiving one another?

The scribes and Pharisees settled upon three times as the righteous number of times to forgive another’s trespasses. The number three in Scripture was the first number representing completion in substance or reality. Since the number seven is a number of spiritual perfection, Peter must have thought that forgiving someone seven times would certainly fulfill the law of righteousness. But Jesus told Peter, not seven times, “but up to seventy times seven.” This answer to Peter must have shocked him because it went far and above any human concept of forgiveness, since seventy times seven would have signified perfect, complete, eternal and divine forgiveness. It is in this context that Jesus introduces a new and radical concept of forgiveness that would become the hallmark of kingdom citizenship.

THE ASTRONOMICAL DEBT

**Read Matthew 18:23-27; Num. 14:18, 19; Prov. 10:16; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 1:7, 8; Eph. 2:4-9; 1 John 1:9; and Luke 23:34. What do these verses tell us about the wages of sin and the cost of forgiveness? \_\_\_\_\_**

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A debt of ten thousand talents would amount to more than ten million dollars in today’s currency. By any measure, the amount owed to the king would be far beyond the ability of any servant to ever repay. The king had every right to take

*“Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart ~ these, O God, You will not despise.”*

*Psalm 51:14-17*

everything that servant owned, then sell him, his wife and his children into lives of slavery (2 Kings 4:1; Nehemiah 5:8). In a just a few words Jesus perfectly captured the fallen human condition and the dread of facing that final moment when we must stand before God and give account of our life to Him.

**Read 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27, 28; and Rev. 14:6, 7.**

**What do these verses tell us about the settling of accounts Jesus spoke of in this parable? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**GOD’S GRACE AND MERCY IS THE ONLY WAY**

**Read Rom. 5:15-20; 6:23; 9:15, 16; Eph. 1:7; 2:4-9; 1 Tim. 1:12-16; Titus 3:4-7; and Heb. 4:16. In this parable the servant fell down before the king, saying, “Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.” What do these verses say about having our “account” settled with God? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Jesus is the King who pays the debt He does not owe because we owe a debt we cannot pay. Here is a perfect portrait of the grace and mercy that flows from the divine heart of our Savior. Mercy alone can save us, for there is nothing we can do to pay off our mountain of debt to God.

*“He pled for mercy, not for remission. He promised restitution, knowing that he could make a beginning and no more. In response, he received what he had least expected – acquittal.”*

*S. J. Kistemaker*

It is solely by the finished work of Jesus, our crucified King, that God can redeem our bankrupt state and abolish our overwhelming debt. There is no greater joy in all the world than to hear the voice of our Lord and Savior saying to you, “be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” (Matt. 9:2b)

#### THE PROOF OF KINGDOM CITIZENSHIP

**Read Matthew 18:28-35. As bright as the first half of this parable is, the second half is as dark. What went wrong?** \_\_\_\_\_

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The second half of this parable has troubled many, for on the surface it appears that Jesus might be teaching that if we who have received God’s forgiveness turn around and fail to forgive others, we will lose our salvation. However, Jesus was teaching the truth that anyone who cannot forgive is unable receive forgiveness from God in the first place. The merciful king in this parable extended forgiveness to his servant, but the servant left the presence of his king unaffected by what had just happened. Like “pearls before swine” the grace given to the unmerciful will end up trampled in the mud (Matt. 7:6).

**Review the Parable of the Wheat and Tares and The Dragnet. How do those parables help explain the behavior of the unmerciful servant?** \_\_\_\_\_

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*“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”*

*James 2:13*

Forgiveness is an essential characteristic of a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. God cannot overlook the unmerciful, for they are behaving in a way that is contrary to His Word, and His nature. The grace of God pardons by accepting the sinner as if he had never sinned at all: “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:34b). A person, who cannot forgive those who have trespassed against him, cannot or will not receive forgiveness for their trespasses from God. One way or the other, they will always be trying to justify themselves before God by their own works of righteousness.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant is a perfect illustration of Jesus’ teaching on prayer found in the Sermon on the Mount. “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14, 15).

## X. *“The Parable of the Landowner*

*“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.” Matthew 20:1*

In order to gain the full impact of this Parable of the Landowner, it is essential to place it in its proper context, beginning with the exchange between Jesus and the rich young man (Matt. 19:16-22), and the disciples’ response to Jesus’ teaching about riches and the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:23-30).

**Review Lesson VII. *The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl*, and then read Matthew 19:16-30.**

**Why did the rich young ruler go away sorrowful? \_\_\_\_**

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*“Jesus made the point that heaven’s rewards are based upon God’s standards and our faithfulness to our calling in both attitude and action (1 Cor. 4:5). There will be no negotiating or technicalities to consider.”*

*Stewart K. Weber*

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How did Jesus' disciples react to His statement, "Assuredly, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"? \_\_\_\_\_

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Jesus' teaching on riches and the kingdom of heaven shocked His disciples because first-century Jewish theology taught that the rich had two great advantages over the poor. First, the very fact they were rich meant that they were favored and under God's blessing – material wealth and righteousness were closely linked in the Jewish mentality (Deut. 7:13; 8:18). And second, the rich were able to give generously to the poor and thus gain greater merit with God. The image of a camel going through the eye of a needle to describe how difficult it is for the rich to enter heaven left the disciples shocked and perplexed: "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus' response to the disciples' question reminds us that in matters of salvation, "with God all things are possible."

Peter pressed the issue further (Matt. 19:27). The Hebrew Scriptures taught that obedience would bring reward in this life (Deut. 28:1-14). **Read Matt. 19:28-29. Did Jesus teach that obedience and immediate reward in this life would always be linked?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read *The Beatitudes* (Matt. 5:3-12). What are the rewards Jesus said are for those who follow Him?** \_\_\_\_\_

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*"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face. Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all day long. And in Your righteousness they are exalted. For You are the glory of their strength, and in Your favor our horn is exalted."*

*Psalms 89:14-17*

**Read Matt. 19:30 and 20:16. What issue does the Parable of the Landlord address?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Matt. 20:1-16. The landowner is the central figure in this parable. Who is the landowner? (Note: Is. 5:1, 2; and Jer. 12:10).** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who are the laborers? (Note: Luke 10:7; 1 Th. 3:2; and 1 Tim. 5:18).** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read the Parable of the Landowner again and note all of his activities.** \_\_\_\_\_

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It is the actions of the landowner, who is Christ Himself, that drives this story from beginning to end. The Lord of the vineyard is in charge of everything; He goes out and finds laborers who are willing to work diligently in His vineyard; he hires them and he sets the wages. Not once or twice, but throughout the day – even up to the eleventh hour – this landowner never stops searching for those who are willing to help him bring in the ready harvest.

*“Do you not say,  
‘There are still four  
months and then comes  
the harvest?’ Behold, I  
say to you, lift up your  
eyes and look at the  
fields, for they are  
already white for  
harvest! And he who  
reaps receives wages,  
and gathers fruit for  
eternal life, that both he  
who sows and he who  
reaps may rejoice  
together. For in this the  
saying is true: ‘One  
sows and another  
reaps.’ I sent you to  
reap that for which you  
have not labored; others  
have labored, and you  
have entered into their  
labors.”*

*John 4:35-38*

The landowner went out early in the morning, hired for the day whoever he could find and agreed to pay them what was considered a fair day's wage for that time: one denarius. **What did the landowner promise to pay those laborers he hired the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth, and the eleventh hour?** \_\_\_\_\_

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At the end of the day all of the laborers were paid the same wage, regardless of when they were hired. For those who were hired at the eleventh hour, this seemed an extravagant wage. And for those who were hired at different times, throughout the day, a denarius was still too generous. Those who were hired early in the morning believed they could expect a greater reward: they were hired first and had worked an entire day. So based upon what the others were paid, their expectation was they would be paid far more than those who started last – at the eleventh hour. The problem with human expectations is that they are often higher than reality. And those hired first, rather than being satisfied with the fair day's wage happily agreed to that morning, left disappointed and complaining – not because they were cheated but because they wanted more than what they were offered in the beginning.

In the kingdoms of this world, he who works the longest and the hardest receives the most pay. Merit, position, ability, skill and training count for everything. From the beginning, our entrance into the kingdom of heaven depends upon the grace of God and the blood of Jesus, not upon our own righteous works. In the same way, our rewards in heaven will be based upon God's grace and not upon any human calculations. *“For the Lord does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7b*

*“Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury, for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.’”*

*Mark 12:41-44*



## *XI. The Parable of the Marriage Feast*

*“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son...” Matthew 22:2*

“The Parable of the Marriage Feast” is actually the third in a series of three parables starting in Matthew 21: 28 – “The Two Sons”, “The Wicked Tenants”, and “The Marriage Feast”. Jesus taught these in response to His rejection as the Messiah by the Jewish leaders, and by the Jewish nation as a whole. **Review Lesson One part two, *Jesus Authenticates His Ministry to the Nation by His Miracles*. Then read Matthew 21:23-46. Who was Jesus speaking about in these parables?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What was the response of those who perceived that Jesus was speaking of them?** \_\_\_\_\_

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In the first of these three “controversy” parables, Jesus addressed the rejection by the present Jewish leadership of the Gospel of the Kingdom, presented by John the Baptist, and their refusal to prepare for the immanent arrival of the Messiah: “For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors, and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.” (Matt. 21:32)

In the second in the set of these three parables, Jesus compares the religious leaders of the Jews to the “wicked

*“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.”*

*Psalms 118:22, 23*

vinedressers" who not only rejected and abused but even killed one of the servants of the rightful owner of the vineyard; in the end, they killed the landowner's own son when he came to them to collect the fruit of the vine that rightfully belonged to his father. In this parable Jesus ripped the façade off the hypocrisy of the scribes' and the Pharisees' loyalty to the Law while being disloyal to the Lord.

**Read Psalm 80; Is. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; and Hosea 10:1-4. Would those who listened to this parable need Jesus to explain it's meaning to them? \_\_\_\_\_**

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The history of Israel reveals a people who often found themselves acting like the wicked tenants in Jesus' parable. The religious leaders who opposed Jesus were convinced that they were the protectors of their own vineyard, and treated John the Baptist and now Jesus like they were outsiders. This parable was intended to set them straight: in rejecting John the Baptist and the Word of God delivered through the prophets who came before him, they were rejecting the lordship of the God of Israel. And since it was already in their hearts to do away with Jesus, they would be guilty of killing God's own Son.

**Read The Parable of the Marriage Feast (Matt. 22: 1-14). The parable can be viewed as a play with three acts:**

**ACT ONE: The Invitation Rejected**

**ACT TWO: The Invitation Expanded**

**ACT THREE: The Guest Without a Garment**

**List the key players in this parable: \_\_\_\_\_**

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*"Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.*

*Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation."*

*Matthew 23:35, 36*

The drama of this parable opens with a scene that would be familiar to Jesus' audience: a wedding. In Jewish tradition, an invitation to a wedding would be extended first at the betrothal of the couple. So Jesus begins his story long after the first invitations to the wedding have been given; everything is now ready for the bride and groom. It is now time for the invited guests to show up and for the process to be completed.

**Read John 3:29, Eph. 5:25-27; and Rev. 21:2-4.**

**Who are the bride and bridegroom of this parable?**

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Although the son and his bride are never described in this parable and are not directly involved in the action, they are the reason for everything; their wedding banquet is the set and setting for the drama of the story.

**Read Deut. 7:6; Matt. 10:5, 6; 15:24; Acts 2:36-39; and Rom. 1:16. Who are those who are first invited to the marriage supper? \_\_\_\_\_**

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His subjects reject each and every invitation of the king. Some just ignore the king and go about their normal routines; others used violence against the king's messengers. But all showed contempt for the king and his son. The first act closes with a prophetic warning to those who have acted so shamefully towards the Lord and His only begotten Son: "And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." (This prophecy was fulfilled in 70 AD when the Roman army laid siege to Jerusalem. The city fell with a great loss of life and the total destruction of the Temple. All that remained of the Temple Mount complex was the Western Wall, which today is known as the "Wailing Wall" of the Jews.)

## **Israel's Rejection**

In Romans chapters 9-11 The Apostle Paul expressed his anguish over his own people's refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah. How could the nation, which had been specially prepared by God to express the kingdom of heaven on earth – the nation that could glory in so many unique promises and the privileges of divine grace – fail to recognize, and then participate in the brutal murder of their long-anticipated Messiah? The Jews who refused the invitation to the wedding feast were like the natural but fruitless branches that were broken off the vine and the Gentiles, who were responding to the wedding invitation in large numbers, were being grafted into the vine in their place. But this is not to say that all of Israel is without hope in the present: for all those who call upon the name of the Lord – both Jew and Gentile – during this age of Grace, shall be saved (are grafted in). And Israel is not without hope in the future, for a time will come when all the promises of God to that nation shall come to pass.

The second act of this drama opens with a new and expanded invitation. Those who were invited first demonstrated by their own actions that they were unworthy to come to the marriage feast prepared for them. Not content to have empty seats at his son's wedding, the king commanded his servants to "go into the highways, and as many as you can find, invite them to the wedding." So at the king's bidding, "the servants went into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good."

**Compare this part of the Parable of the Marriage Feast with the Parable of the Dragnet (Matt. 13:47-50) and the Parable of the Landowner (Matt. 20:1-16). Then read Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:47, 48; Acts 1:7, 8. As servants of the King of kings what do these verses tell us we should we be doing? \_\_\_\_\_**

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The divine mercy of God seeks out anyone who will respond to its call. The Jews were first in line to receive God's gracious invitation to participate in the consummation of the union between the Son of God and His bride. The Jews mistook their first place to mean they did not need to obey their Lord when He called them to come to Him (John 5:38-40; 6:35-58; and John 7:37-44). Now the invitation would go out to the Publicans, the tax collectors, and sinners; even the Gentiles, "who did not pursue righteousness" and who were considered unworthy of promises of God's elect, were invited to come to the Marriage Feast.

The third and final act of this dramatic story takes an ominous turn. The king goes to see his guests and discovers

*"Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

*Matthew 8:10b-12*

one who had accepted the invitation to come to the feast, but who had rejected the wedding garments provided for each and every guest who answered the call. **Read Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:20-24; and Col. 3:9, 10. What is the symbolic significance of the wedding garment?**

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Like the person described in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, the guest who came to the marriage feast dressed in his own clothes never received the grace that was extended to him. The servant who refused to forgive exposed a heart of stone that never accepted the forgiveness of his master in the first place. The guest who refused the wedding garment exposed a sinful, self-righteous heart that rejected the righteousness of Christ. When he was asked, “Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?” He had no answer.

In the end there may be many who want a place at the table of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb apart from being born again. They will presume that their own righteous works will be sufficient to earn them a place at the feast. “My clothes may not be perfect, but they are good enough, I do not need the garments of another,” they sincerely believe. Church attendance, tithing, and good works of Christian service are no substitutes for wearing the garment washed in the cleansing blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. God is faithful and will not withhold the wedding garment from anyone (good or bad) that asks for it and puts it on.

God calls on all people everywhere to repent. Indeed many are called, but only those who leave everything behind and answer the call – and then only those who “put on” the righteousness of Christ – are truly the chosen few.

*“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

*Ephesians 2:4-9*

## *XII. The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins*

*“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.” Matthew 25:1*

The last two parables of the kingdom we shall examine in this study have a universal application for all believers until the end of the age. In order to fully understand these parables we must examine them within the context of Jesus’ final discourse before He withdrew into the Upper Room with His closest disciples to share with them a final Passover Supper before His arrest and Passion.

The crucifixion of the Son of Man was only days away. Jesus warned the people against the hypocrisy of their religious leaders: “for they say, and do not do” (Matt. 23:3b). Then Jesus turned to the leaders of the Jews who had rejected Him and who planned to silence Him once and for all. He pronounced “Seven Woes” upon them, judging them for their hard and uncircumcised hearts. “Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation” (Matt. 23:36).

Then Jesus looked upon the Temple in Jerusalem one last time and grieved over the people of Israel, knowing how much had been lost. They had been God’s special people, chosen from among all the nations to reflect the kingdom of heaven in all its glory, with Jerusalem as its center and the place where God intended to meet with the nations “face to face.” Time and time again the Jews refused to heed God’s call. Time and time again they

*“Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised – Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.”*

*Jeremiah 9:25, 26*

abused or killed the prophets sent to them. Time and time again they refused to heed the call of the God who loved them and urged them to return to Him. Soon Jerusalem would be destroyed and those who were responsible for the death of God's one and only Son would be destroyed along with the city and the Temple they held so dear. "See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you will see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Matt. 23:38-39).

One last time, Jesus departed from the temple, while His disciples – maybe in an attempt to console His grief – tried to draw His attention to all the splendid buildings of temple Herod the Great had built. Then Jesus breaks the news to His disciples, "I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be cast down" (Matt. 24:2b). Jesus led His shocked disciples out of the city to the Mount of Olives. The disciples could no longer contain themselves and they peppered their Rabbi with questions concerning the future events He had just spoken of. **Read Matthew 24:3. What were the three events the disciples asked Jesus about?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Matthew 24:4-51; Mark 13:5-37; and Luke 21:8-36 record Jesus' answers to the disciples' questions about the end of the age and the signs of His coming, but He left the "When?" unanswered. **Read Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32. Why did Jesus leave the question about His Second Coming at the end of the age unanswered?**

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*"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."  
1 Thessalonians*

Now it is in the context of the events at the end of the age and His second coming – and in particular in context of the fact that no one knows the exact time of His return – that Jesus taught His disciples about the importance of being watchful and faithful until the day He comes back to judge the living and the dead. Matthew (24:32-44), Mark (13:28-37) and Luke (21:29-36) all recount the lesson of the fig tree Jesus taught in reference to the fact that “no one knows” about the day and hour of His returning.

**Read Matt. 24:42-44; Mark 13:35-37; and Luke 21:36. What is the point Jesus is making all believers concerning the day He shall return? \_\_\_\_\_**

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#### THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

**Read Matthew 25:1-13.** Jesus returns to a familiar theme to find a parable that best illustrates the need for citizens of His kingdom to watch carefully and to wait expectantly for His return: a wedding ceremony. In Jesus’ day, weddings were major social events, so He returned to this theme once more to make His point. For centuries interpreters of the Bible of every stripe have written volumes explaining the meanings of every detail of this parable. The result has been many (and often conflicting) interpretations of this parable that may support the particular theology of the interpreter, but will end up taking the student far away from the parable’s original context.

There is no record of Jesus giving an explanation for each of the elements of this particular parable. Certain

*“My son, keep sound wisdom and discretion; let them not depart from your eyes; so they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck. Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; for the Lord will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught.”*

*Proverbs 3:21-26*

elements may be fairly easy to understand based upon the fact that “ten” and “oil” are often used as types in Scripture. And some general spiritual principles can be implied from the Virgins’ behaviors. But both teacher and student must be careful to use sound judgment and discernment from the Holy Spirit when interpreting any Scripture, and not try to make a particular passage of Scripture say something it was never intended to say.

**Read Matt. 25:13 and compare it with Matt. 24:42-44 & 50. What is the main thought Jesus is communicating in this Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins? \_\_\_\_\_**

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This parable is about being watchful for the Lord’s return. The Ten Virgins were invited to take part in the great procession of the bride and groom to the marriage feast. But when the groom did not come at the expected time, the five foolish ones ran out of oil for their lamps. By the time they returned from purchasing more oil, the procession was over and it was too late to join the feast. When Jesus returns to take His people into His heavenly kingdom, we must be ready. Not only must we watch carefully for His return, but we must also be prepared to endure the longest night with our light still shining, should He delay His coming “...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8b)

### *XIII. The Parable of the Talents*

*“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.” Matthew 25:14-30.*

*“How  
marvelous the  
power which, from  
the noisy night  
procession of an  
oriental wedding,  
could bring this  
exquisite parable  
of the short,  
warm Eastern  
night, the ten  
girls, the cry, the  
peace of the  
prepared, the  
anguish of the  
unready, the  
inside and  
outside of the  
door! O blessed  
Comforter, may  
we not fail thee,  
as thou wilt not  
fail those who in  
their weakness  
seek thy help!”  
F. B. Meyer*

Immediately after the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, Jesus tells the story of the Talents. Clearly it is intended to compliment the lesson of the previous parable. The Parable of the Talents is the longest parable in the Gospel of Matthew. Its sixteen verses contain detailed conversations between the master and his servants and include a closing statement that ties this parable to all the others that address the coming judgment at the end of the age.

In the Virgins, Jesus revealed the *inward* spiritual character needed by the citizens of His kingdom to endure to the end: watchfulness. The wise person fills to overflowing the “oil” of the Spirit, not knowing the hour of the Bridegroom’s arrival. The foolish ones think the measure of the Spirit they received at the beginning of their journey will be all that is necessary. The wise zealously pursue the “oil” from the start, knowing that in the procession of the Bridegroom their lamps will illuminate the path that all may follow (“*Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.*” 1 Cor. 14:12) The foolish were selfish in that they brought only what they thought was necessary for their own needs; they discovered too late that in thinking only of themselves, they ran out of oil and proved themselves unworthy of entering the Marriage Feast when the time came.

In His Parable of the Talents, Jesus turned the attention of His disciples to the outward, external characteristic of *faithfulness*, which must be possessed by His servants.

**On a separate piece of paper, write in your own words the story of the Talents. Do not try to interpret the meaning of the parable, just tell the story in your own words.**

*“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”*

*James 5:13-16*



Just before His final Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-40), Jesus stopped in Jericho where he stayed with Zacchaeus, the repentant tax collector (Luke 19:1-10). There Jesus taught a parable similar to the Parable of the Talents: The Parable of the Ten Minas. **On a separate sheet of paper, write in your own words The Parable of the Ten Minas. Do not try to interpret the meaning of the parable, just tell the story in your own words.**

A side-by-side comparison of the two parables will reveal many similarities along with some key differences. The most important difference between the two has to do with the rejection by the citizens of their king and the king's punishment of those citizens who had become his enemies (found in The Parable of the Ten Minas). **Read Luke 19:1-11. Why did Jesus include the rejection of the king by his citizens in the Parable of the Ten Minas? (Note verses 7 & 11) \_\_\_\_\_**

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Although the amounts given by the nobleman in each parable differ, and the profits earned by the faithful servants differ, the spiritual principle taught in these parables remains the same. What is the lesson the servants of the kingdom of heaven should take to heart from the Parable of the Ten Minas and the Parable of the Talents? \_\_\_\_\_

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*“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods.”*  
*Matthew 24:45-47*

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Both of these parables reveal the same spiritual reality: during this undetermined period of time before Jesus' return, the citizens of His kingdom are charged with the stewardship of the resources of His kingdom. How much each citizen is given does not matter, what matters is how they make use of the time, treasure and abilities given them by their Master. The King blesses His servants for a specific reason: to be a blessing (Gen. 12:2, 3; Ps. 67:1, 2; & 2 Cor. 1:3, 4); There is no place in the kingdom of heaven for the servant who is motivated by selfish, self-interest and self-preservation.

#### *XIV. A Final Warning: The Sheep And The Goats*

*"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations of will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." Matthew 25:31, 32*

**Read Matthew 25:21-46.** Some commentaries consider the closing verses of Matthew chapter 25 to be a parable of the Last Judgment; others treat it as Jesus' vivid description of the judgment that will take place in

*"And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."*

*1 Peter 1:17-19*

heaven at the time of His Second Coming. Either way, it is Jesus' final warning to all those who had been listening to His parables concerning the End of the Age.

In His final statements concerning the End of the Age, Jesus confirmed three foundational truths that every citizen of the Kingdom must take to heart:

**1. The Son of Man will return in glory.** No one knows the day or hour of His return. False prophets and sign-seekers have come with each generation of believers; every one of them has been proven wrong. The word of God also reminds us that in the last days “scoffers will come.” driven by the selfish desires of their flesh, they will sow seeds of doubt about the Second Coming of Christ. They will be convinced that nothing changes, that “all things continue as they were from the beginning,” and will dismiss the promise of His coming as mythology, or the wishful thinking of the simpleminded.

The parables of Jesus remind His servants to be alert and faithful until the end. Since no one knows when He will return from His heavenly kingdom, vigilance and loyalty to our absent Master is required at every moment. We must be prepared with an abundance of the “oil” of the Spirit if we are to endure the long night until He comes as a Bridegroom for His bride. Trials and temptations will come and test our faithfulness, but the “good and faithful” citizens of the kingdom must serve and if necessary suffer to the end.

**2. The Son of Man never left us.** If we have the “eyes to see” and the “ears to hear” we will see and hear Him amongst us in the form of the hungry, the thirsty, the lonely, the destitute, the sick and those who are in

*“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”*

*James 1:26, 27*

various prisons. When the Son of Man came the first time, He came “to seek and save that which was lost.” He came to those who knew they were in need of a Savior, not to those who foolishly clung to their own “filthy rags” of self-righteous works. They resented Jesus, the divine physician who identified with the poor, the defenseless, the hungry, the lonely, and the outcasts all around Him (Mark 2:17). They were like “The unforgiving servant” who could neither receive nor give mercy; and they were like the hateful citizens in the Parable of the Ten Minas who refused to have “this man to reign over us.”

The Sheep and the Goats is a clear warning to all who bear the name “Christian.” In the end we will not be judged by our faithful church attendance; we will not be judged by the size or magnificence of our church buildings. We will not be judged by the beauty of the hymns we sing, or by the tithes and offerings we bring. In the end we will be judged by how we expressed the *agape* – the divine love of God – to others. Salvation is not about works. The heart and soul of Christianity is a restored relationship with the God of all creation through the sacrificial love of Christ. Once restored, we become God’s holy temple – the dwelling place of God upon the earth by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. As citizens of the kingdom we are charged with the responsibility to be “a light of the world” – that “city on a hill,” which draws all nations to Christ.

- 3. The Son of Man will judge all people.** The Second Coming of Christ is the future dimension of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is of the utmost importance that the citizens of the kingdom be ready to receive their king when He comes. Alive or dead, it makes no

*“The more we learn to discern Christ challenging us through the poor, the more prepared we shall be to face Him on the Day of Judgment. For on that day all will be disclosed.”*

*John R. W. Stott*

*“Jesus is holding up to us the pattern for practical, Calvary-like love. There is nothing like it in the whole world. It is the supreme hallmark of the disciple of the Kingdom. There is one test, and one only, of the extent of our love for Him, and it is a very uncomfortable one. How have we treated the poor?”*

*Michael Green*

difference, for “we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thes. 4:17a).

What the unfaithful servant in the parables of the Talents (Matt. 25:24, 25) and of the Ten Minas (Luke 19:20, 21) failed to understand is that, although the Lord’s judgment (whereby rewards and punishments are handed out in accordance with strict laws of justice) can be harsh, it is not meant for retribution or vengeance upon His faithful servants. Rather the focus of His judgment is upon the relationship to the Father, through His chosen servant Jesus, The Son of Man. The true nature of the relationship of the citizens/servants of the kingdom of God to their King will be confirmed at the final judgment. The evidence of a person’s relationship to God will be confirmed by how that person treated those The Son of Man cared most about and identified with to the point where He would say, “ inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

James (chapter 2) addresses this issue in his lesson on genuine faith. At the heart of his argument James echoes the words of Christ in His parables of the kingdom when he challenges those who disregard the needs of others, believing that faith alone will save them:

*“But some of you will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble!*

*“We are never told in the New Testament to ‘build the Kingdom.’ The Kingdom is built from the foundation of the world, built into the nature of reality: it is reality. We do not ‘build the Kingdom’ – we receive it. Lets be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.”*  
*E. Stanley Jones*

*But do you want to know O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:18-20)*

**This concludes our study of "This Gospel of the Kingdom Part Two: The Parables of the Kingdom."**

## *XV. Conclusion*

Through our study of “This Gospel of the Kingdom” we have discovered many truths about the Kingdom Jesus proclaimed in word and deed. In “Part One: The Kingdom Sermons” we learned how Jesus taught that the kingdom is more than a territory and its people, it is also the *basiliah* – the reign of God. The idea of the kingdom had its foundations in the Old Testament prophecies and in Jewish theology. When Jesus came as the fulfillment of those prophecies, He not only revealed a new and unexpected reality of the kingdom of heaven, but He also brought the *basiliah* with Him. In His Sermon on the Mount and in other sermons, Jesus taught the people the principles of the kingdom. At the same time, Jesus demonstrated through His actions the reality that where the King is, the kingdom is present. Through His many miracles and His direct challenge of the Jewish religious leaders’ presuppositions about the kingdom, Jesus forced all of Israel to accept or reject Him as their long awaited King.

The sad record of the Gospels and Acts shows how for the most part the Jews rejected their King and His kingdom. When He failed to meet their expectations of what the kingdom was supposed to be, they turned away from Jesus and began to look for someone else to come. Then as the confrontations grew more intense and the rejection of the nation of Israel as a whole became surer, Jesus shifted His method of teaching. He began to rely upon parables to teach divine truths about the kingdom to the faithful who would search out their meanings like the merchant in search of fine pearls, while those who were on the outside of the kingdom would be hearing but not able to understand, and seeing but not able to perceive what Jesus revealed about His kingdom.

In His “Parable of the Sower” Jesus encourages us to sow the “good seed” of the Gospel to all men, understanding that the conditions and attitudes of the hearts of the hearers will determine the fruitfulness of the harvest. In “The Parable of the Wheat and Tares” Jesus revealed that the “sons of the kingdom” must co-exist with the “sons of the wicked one” until the end of the age. “The Parable of the Growing Seed” taught us how the fruitfulness of the harvest is not dependant upon human effort, but upon the indestructible life and power of the Word itself. “The Parable of the Mustard Seed” taught us not to be discouraged by small beginnings because in its proper time, even the tiniest seed of the kingdom becomes a great tree that provides shelter and rest for people of every nation. Jesus used the illustration of “The Parable of the Leaven” to reveal the process of inner spiritual transformation that happens in the life of a person who receives His kingdom. In the parables of “The Hidden Treasure” and “The Pearl” Jesus taught

that only those who recognize the true value and worth of the kingdom of heaven would freely surrender all they have to purchase it.

The disciples were looking for the End the Age and the coming of the Messianic Kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures; and again Jesus turned to parables to reveal much of what was to come. In “The Parable of the Dragnet” Jesus described to His “fishers of men” the depths of the reach of the Gospel that draws men and women from every nation into the kingdom; and then at the end of the age, how the angels will separate the good from the bad. In “The Unforgiving Servant” Jesus illustrated the sad reality that there are those who have been offered the grace of the kingdom, but are unable to receive it. Jesus’ “Parable of the Landowner” shows us that in kingdom of heaven, the unmerited favor of God and not human effort will determine our rewards. The “Parable of the Marriage Feast” taught us how the divine mercy of God seeks out anyone who will respond to its call. Finally, the parables of “The Wise and Foolish Virgins” and of “The Talents” teach us to remain watchful and faithful to the end. We ended our study with one last final warning from Jesus about the separation of the good from the wicked ones at the end of the age: genuine faith in God will reveal itself in how each citizen of the kingdom cares for those Jesus most identified with – the poor, the defenseless, the hungry the lonely, and the outcasts all around us. Eventually this age of grace will come to an end and judgment will begin, *“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17)*

The Gospel of the kingdom Jesus inaugurated teaches us that in the end there will be no excuses, and no second chances. Citizens of the kingdom must be especially prepared for the end of this age of grace (also known as the Church Age) for “to whom much is given, much is required.” For the wicked and unprofitable servant who takes advantage of his Master’s absence to indulge his own selfish and self-centered ambitions: BEWARE, for “even what he has will be taken away.” For the good and faithful servants who understand the unfathomable riches of the kingdom, who have received the grace and mercy of God with a full heart of thanksgiving and praise to God, and who willingly give all that they are and all that they have to draw all men to Christ before the doors are shut and the Marriage Feast of the Lamb and His Bride begins, they will hear the words from their Master their hearts long to hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant... enter into the joy of your Lord.”

May the Kingdom of Heaven be with you always!

# APPENDIX A

## THE PARBLES OF JESUS

*“All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:*

*I will open My mouth in parables;*

*I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.”*

*Matthew 13:34, 35*

<u>PARABLE</u>	<u>THEME</u>	<u>SCRIPTURE</u>
1. The Sower	A Key Parable (Mark 4:13); Individual responses to the Word	Matt. 13:3-8; 18-23 Mark 4:3-8; Luke 8:5-8
2. The Wheat & Tares	Sons of the Kingdom & Sons of the evil one	Matt. 13:24-30
3. The Mustard Seed	The Kingdom begins insignificantly but grows to greatness	Matt. 13:31, 32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18, 19
4. The Leaven	Inner transformation of citizens of the kingdom	Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20, 21
5. The Hidden Treasure	Value/cost of the kingdom	Matt. 13:44
6. The Pearl	Value/cost of the kingdom	Matt. 13:45, 46
7. The Dragnet	Wicked separated from the righteous at the end of the age	Matt. 13:47-50
8. The Unforgiving Servant	Kingdom forgiveness	Matt. 18:23-35
9. The Landowner	Grace (Unmerited favor) of God Extended to citizens of the kingdom	Matt. 20:1-16
10. The Two sons	Kingdom obedience	Matt. 21:28-32
11. The Wicked Tenants	Kingdom rejected	Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19
12. The Marriage Feast	Invitation rejected & extended; God clothes those who respond	Matt. 22:1-14
13. The Wise and Foolish Virgins	Watch for the arrival of the Bridegroom	Matt. 25:1-13
14. The Talents	Kingdom stewardship	Matt. 25:14-30

15. The Growing Seed	God produces the growth	Mark 4:26:29
16. The Two Debtors	He who is forgiven little loves little	Luke 7:41-43
17. The Good Samaritan	True religion of the Kingdom	Luke 10:25-37
18. The Friend in Need	Persistence in the Kingdom	Luke 11:5-8
19. The Rich Fool	Inadequacy of earthly wealth	Luke 12:16-21 (Note: Luke 12:22-34)
20. The Fruitless Fig Tree	Period of Grace will come to an end	Luke 13:6-9
21. Kingdom Lessons from	The way up is the way down; Invite those who cannot repay (Note: Prov. 19:17); those who refuse God's Invitation will be excluded	Luke 14:7-11; 12-14; 16-24
22. The Lost Sheep	God's love for the lost	Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7
23. The Lost Coin	God's love for the lost	Luke 15:8-10
24. The Lost (Prodigal) Son	God's love for the lost	Luke 15:11-32
25. The Shrewd Steward	God and Mammon	Luke 16:1-9
26. Rich Man & Lazarus	Our action in this life have eternal consequences	Luke 16:19-31
27. The Unworthy Slaves	Faith or Obedience	Luke 17:1-10
28. The Unrighteous Judge	Contrast with god's justice for His Elect	Luke 18:1-8
29. The Pharisee and The Tax Collector	Self-righteous are not justified	Luke 18:10-14
30. The Ten Minas	Use what God has given or lose it	Luke 19:12-27
31. The Sheep and Goats	The Last Judgment	Matt. 31:46



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### OTHER BOOKS WRITTEN BY FREDERICK OSBORN

1. *Jesus Over India: A 52 Week Journey Through the Heart of India*
2. ***Building Wealth* (English) eBook (available on Amazon.com)**
3. ***Church Planting Movements* (Revised - English) eBook (available on Amazon.com)**
4. *Exploring the New Testament* (English) – Authentic Publishers, Secunderabad, India  
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