

# The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

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## Intro

We welcome you to this special live stream experience of Chew On This.

You are about to enter a discussion on how to actually live out faith in Christ. Living it out loud within our messy lives. The content of this discussion comes from The Pastoral Preaching notes and this live, small group discussion these notes will prompt here tonight. Something we call: A Community Based Learning Experience. Come, Chew On This with us.

**Opening Question(s):** [Pertains to Subject being discussed. Pulls listener in.]

**Introduction:** This is Pr. Orleen Haseltine with and \*\*\*\*\* along with Bruce Nelson (and our very own Otto Steve Lunde & Pr. Robin Bjornson joining us remotely).

## Date/Topic:

We thank you for joining us for this week's discussion on Chew On This. This week's topic **The Three Kingdoms: Your Kingdom**

**Access/Website:** All sermon/discussion, raw notes, and handouts are available at:  
[realchurch.org/wednesdaynight](http://realchurch.org/wednesdaynight)

## Discussion

**Closing Statement** [ Gives application of the topic. How do I apply to my life what was just talked about?]

**Kingdom Principle: Our Life Priority**

Close with: **Matthew 28:18-19** ESV

*<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Closing Question: Is this my priority? Is this what I do?

## Outro (Steve)

Thank you for joining us for this week's discussion on **The Three Kingdoms: Your Kingdom** a.k.a. **What does a life look like that believes what the Bible says is actually God's spoken Word?**

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

To enjoy this process live, come join us and the Wednesday Night Crew every Wednesday night @ Maranatha's Forest Lake Campus @ 6:30PM. This is Steve Lunde, ALWAYS BE KIND.

### Three Kingdoms Prequel Article© Pastor Orleen Haseltine, 2008/2020

Have you ever wondered why you get an Aha! moment?  
When what you need to do, all of a sudden, is so crystal clear in your mind.  
Or you actually see a picture in your mind's eye that explains an event?  
Or you feel an overwhelming sense of comfort in the time of need?

We experience these activities because we are eternal spiritual beings having a temporary physical experience.

There are times when the spiritual sticks its head a little further out and we can actually notice its existence.  
It touches us.  
As Christians, when our spiritual selves interact with His Spirit, called the Holy Spirit, we find answers, peace, companionship.  
But there are other spiritual influences around us.  
They also seek to interact with us, affect us, scare us.

We live in a spiritual world.

This world can be divided into three kingdoms:

1. Your Kingdom, which was given at creation.
2. God's kingdom, which He has bequeathed to Jesus Christ.
3. The Enemy's Kingdom, which has boundaries and is temporal, that exists on this present earth.

***It is essential that we know the rules of these kingdoms so we know how to navigate within them.***

~~What is the Kingdom of God? Is it a place? A person? A code of action?  
What can we expect of Christ's Kingdom while living here on earth?  
What is Kingdom Living?  
What is the role of parables in teaching us about Christ's Kingdom?  
Is everything Jesus spoke available now, here on this earth?~~

TEACH A NEW WORD:

## praxis

prax·is [práksiss]  
n (formal)

1. **performance or application of skill:** the practical side and application of something, as opposed to its theory (such as a professional skill)

ETERNAL APPLICATION OF SKILLS  
ETERNAL HABITS

2. **established practice:** an established custom or habitual practice

[Late 16th century. Via medieval Latin from Greek , where it was formed from *prattein* "to do."]

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E.G.:

Not just saying: I believe in JC

But...I believe in JC, therefore, I will forgive, etc.

Tonight we will focus on: Habits that have eternal measure.

- If we do not take the kingdom principles and put them into action, are we living in belief without proof, belief without action...is this living in pretend?

**Listener Question** (agree/disagree):

We really do not know Christ if we do not trust what He says enough to practice it.

### **Accessibility + Action = Praxis**

**John 14:15 (ESV)**

*“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”*

#### **Basic understanding:**

Whether we think eternity is real, does not make it so.

Whether we feel something is true, does not make it so.

We do not think nor feel something into existence.

It is true because it is proven to exist.

The area between what we know and have experienced (this is where science live) and the completed reality of that existence (this is where eternity lives) that area is called faith.

That Faith, that in-between space, has supernatural laws that govern it.

Supernatural laws are just like physical laws (think gravity here).

They help us understand how things work.

Who rules this entire equation? The Past, The Present, The Future:

**When we pray Matthew 6:10**, *“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*, what are we asking for?

For Jesus to get His way?

For Jesus to take Heaven and plop on top of earth?

Jesus' Parable of the Ten Minas (I will tell the story and not read it)

#### **Luke 19:11-27**

The Parable of the Ten Minas

<sup>11</sup>As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. <sup>12</sup>He said therefore, “A nobleman went into a far country **to receive for himself a kingdom** and then return. <sup>13</sup>Calling ten of his servants,<sup>[a]</sup> he gave them ten minas,<sup>[a]</sup> and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come.’ <sup>14</sup>But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’ <sup>15</sup>When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. <sup>16</sup>The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’ <sup>17</sup>And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant!<sup>[a]</sup> Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’ <sup>18</sup>And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’ <sup>19</sup>And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’ <sup>20</sup>Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; <sup>21</sup>for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap

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what you did not sow.' <sup>22</sup> He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow?' <sup>23</sup> Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' <sup>24</sup> And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' <sup>25</sup> And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' <sup>26</sup> **'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. <sup>27</sup> But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'**"

- What did the nobleman want?
- Where did he go?
- The point of this parable –  
Invest your talents into God's Kingdom?  
Or Christ has the authority over all, whether you like it or not?

### Kingdom Principle:

- God has given Christ the authority to rule over everything:

#### **Ephesians 1:19-23**

*<sup>19</sup> I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe in him. This is the same mighty power <sup>20</sup> that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. <sup>21</sup> Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. <sup>22</sup> God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. <sup>23</sup> And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself. (NLT)*

- Examining Kingdom Principles that Christ taught will help us learn and understand supernatural laws.
- Easiest way to begin is to examine **the Beatitudes** in His very first sermon (Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7) and then, examine His **Parables** from Matthew 13.

[As a team, we can discuss/define the characteristics and what God promises that is attached to it. (Can be compared to what the world values for contrast).]

### Sermon On The Mount begins with the Beatitudes

1. **(Matt 5:3–6)—Those who depend on God**
  - a. (Matt 5:3)—The poor in spirit
  - b. (Matt 5:4)—The mourners
  - c. (Matt 5:5)—The meek
  - d. (Matt 5:6)—The hungry and the thirsty
2. **(Matt 5:7–9)—Those who live for God**
  - a. (Matt 5:7)—The merciful
  - b. (Matt 5:8)—The pure in heart
  - c. (Matt 5:9)—The peacemakers
3. **(Matt 5:10–12)—Those who are persecuted**
  - a. (Matt 5:10)—The persecuted
  - b. (Matt 5:11–12)—The insulted and slandered

(Osborne, *Matthew*, 164, following Hagner, *Matthew*, 90–91): Beatitudes in **LBD**

#### **Matthew 5:3-11 (NLT)**

**What is the Kingdom of God?** (Besides the Authority to Rule)

Characteristics of it are being described in these chapters (5-7)

**What difference does it make?**

We are blessed by God

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Blessed – Congratulations! Favored by God. Happy.

### Kingdom Principle: Those who depend on God

*“God blesses those who are poor and **realize their need for Him**,  
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

- Poor in spirit – Deprived, Underprivileged, Depressed, Worthless
- The Kingdom of God – Inherit it

### Kingdom Principle: Those who depend on God

*<sup>4</sup> God blesses those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.*

- Mourn – Grieve, Emptiness, Shame, Regret, Loss
- The Kingdom of God – Comfort – security, Encouragement, Peace

### Kingdom Principle: Those who depend on God

*<sup>5</sup> God blesses those who are humble,  
for they will inherit the whole earth.*

- Meek – Humble, Content, Controlled Strength, Quite Strength
- The Kingdom of God – Inherit the whole earth. Entrance into the New Heaven and Earth?

### Kingdom Principle: Those who depend on God

*<sup>6</sup> God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,  
for they will be satisfied.*

- Hunger & Thirst for Righteousness – Passion, Consume, Yearn for Justice & Truth, Vindicate, Validation
- The Kingdom of God – They shall be satisfied, Filled, Vindicated, Validated

### Kingdom Principle: Those who live for God

*<sup>7</sup> God blesses those who are merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.*

- Merciful – Kind, Forgiving, Compassionate, Giving, Grace, Honest, Self-Sacrificing, Sympathetic
- The Kingdom of God – They shall receive the above

### Kingdom Principle: Those who live for God

*<sup>8</sup> God blesses those whose hearts are pure,  
for they will see God.*

- The Pure in Heart – Being Real, Transparent, No hidden motives, Integrity, Moral Excellence
- The Kingdom of God – They Shall See God – Salvation, True love

### Kingdom Principle: Those who live for God

*<sup>9</sup> God blesses those who work for peace,  
for they will be called the children of God.*

- The Peacemakers (Not peace lovers) – Justice, Mediator, Truth tellers, Deal with Conflict,
- The Kingdom of God – FAMILY

**TEAM ASK:** How does one 'GET' these attitudes or characteristics?

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### Kingdom Principle: Those who are persecuted

<sup>10</sup> *God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

- Persecuted for Righteousness sake – Martyred, Despised, Mocked, Made fun of, Cast insults, Slandered for their Christ love/loyalty
- The Kingdom of God – Theirs IS the Kingdom of Heaven

### Kingdom Principle: Those who are persecuted

<sup>11</sup> *“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers.*

- Mocked, Persecuted, Lied about, Slandered
- The Kingdom of God – God Blesses You

**The Kingdom of Heaven involves this opening and closing (sowing and reaping) principle.**

#### What:

Parable: Story or Illustration told to make a specific point: fable, story, moral tale, tale, folk tale, legend, allegory

(Gk. *parabole*, lit. “a placing beside”)

A parable is a lesson from daily life that teaches a spiritual truth. Jesus often told parables to provide an understanding of life, especially life in God's kingdom. **Thirty-five percent of all gospel teaching is written in parables.** Effective teaching method.

Jesus used parables to teach about God's Kingdom.

42 stories told by Christ to illustrate a truth.

Additional 33 brief sayings and metaphors.

Christ, himself, identified certain stories w/the Kingdom and the gospels identify these as parables.

Parables give one Kingdom Principle taught by Christ. There are other truths inside the parable but we must ask WHY Jesus is teaching this along with WHAT He is teaching.

Pioneering scholar C. H. Dodd said a “parable is a metaphor or simile” that “[arrests] the hearer by its vividness or strangeness . . . leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus wanted His followers—then and now—to grapple with these wonderful stories.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Mark 4:11**

*And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in **parables**,*

Parables that Jesus introduces the parable as “The Kingdom of Heaven/God is like...”

#### **Matthew 13:24-30 Parable of the Wheat and Weeds (Tares)**

<sup>24</sup> *Here is another story Jesus told: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away. <sup>26</sup> When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew.*

<sup>27</sup> *“The farmer’s workers went to him and said, ‘Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?’*

<sup>28</sup> *“‘An enemy has done this!’ the farmer exclaimed. “‘Should we pull out the weeds?’ they asked.*

<sup>29</sup> *“‘No,’ he replied, ‘you’ll uproot the wheat if you do. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.’”*

<sup>1</sup> Newton, D. (2018). [Fresh eyes on Jesus' parables: discovering new insights in familiar passages](#). Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook.

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What the people expected: The kingdom's righteous citizens rule over the world with the King.

Truth of the Kingdom: The kingdom's citizens are among the men of the world, growing together until God's harvest time.

### **Matthew 13:31-32 Parable of the Mustard Seed**

*<sup>31</sup> Here is another illustration Jesus used: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. <sup>32</sup> It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches."*

What the people expected: Kingdom begins in majestic glory.

Truth of the Kingdom: Kingdom begins in insignificance; its greatness comes as a surprise.

### **Matthew 13:33 Parable of the Yeast**

*<sup>33</sup> Jesus also used this illustration: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough."*

What the people expected: Only righteousness enters the kingdom; other "raw material" is excluded.

Truth of the Kingdom: The kingdom is implanted in a different "raw material" and grows to fill the whole personality with righteousness.

### **Matthew 13:44 Parable of the Hidden Treasure**

*<sup>44</sup> "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field."*

What the people expected: Kingdom is public and for all.

Truth of the Kingdom: Kingdom is hidden for individual "purchase."

### **Matthew 13:45-46 Parable of the Valuable Pearl**

*<sup>45</sup> "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!"*

What the people expected: Kingdom brings all valued things to men.

Truth of the Kingdom: Kingdom demands abandonment of all values.

### **Matthew 13:47-50 Parable of the Fishing Net (Dragnet)**

*<sup>47</sup> "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that was thrown into the water and caught fish of every kind. <sup>48</sup> When the net was full, they dragged it up onto the shore, sat down, and sorted the good fish into crates, but threw the bad ones away. <sup>49</sup> That is the way it will be at the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the wicked people from the righteous, <sup>50</sup> throwing the wicked into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

What the people expected: Kingdom begins with initial separation of righteous and unrighteous.

Truth of the Kingdom: Kingdom ends with final separation of the unrighteous from righteous.

Some passages refer to the Kingdom of God as a realm, anplace Some as a present reality Some as a future reality And it is all three
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### Kingdom Principle: Our Life Priority

Close with: **Matthew 28:18-19** ESV

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

<sup>18</sup> Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." NLT

**Closing Question:** Is this my priority? Is this what I do?

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### **Luke 10:19**

Behold, I have **given you** authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

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A change in one's:

Allegiance – Matthew 6:10

Expectations – Matthew 6:13

Priorities – Matthew 6:24-34

Values – Matthew 5:3-10

Lifelong mission – Matthew 28:18-20

**BEATITUDES** The group of "blessed are" statements that open the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5:3–12. The term also refers to the four "blessed are" statements that open the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6:20–23. The word "beatitude" originates from the Latin word *beatitudo* (Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 92). They are also called "macarisms," a label that corresponds to the Greek word usually translated "blessed" (μακαριος, *makarios*) that begins each of the beatitudes.

### Form and Source

The form of the statements in the Beatitudes has parallels in ancient Egyptian literature, Hellenistic literature, the Old Testament, and was used by rabbis (Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 92; Hagner, *Matthew*, 88). The Greek translation of various passages in the Old Testament use the identical opening noun "blessed," followed by a noun as the object (with an implied verb)—"Blessed [is] the man" (Μακαριος, *Makarios anēr*) (e.g., Psa 1:1 LXX; compare 2:12; 31:2, 12; 33:9; Prov 3:13; 8:34; 20:7; Eccl 10:17; Job 5:17; Isa 30:18). The beatitude form also finds parallels in deuterocanonical literature (Tob 13:14; Wis 3:13; Sir 14:1; 25:8; 31:8; Pss. Sol. 4:23). Beatitudes are also found 28 times throughout the New Testament outside of Matt 5:3–10 and Luke 6:20–23 (e.g., Matt 11:6; 13:16; Luke 1:45; 7:23; 11:27; John 20:29; Rom 4:7–8; Jas 1:12; Rev 1:3; 22:7). However, Matthew 5:3–12 and Luke 6:20–23 stand apart: "Extended lists of beatitudes are rare in biblical and other early Jewish sources" (Nolland, *Matthew*, 197).

Some believe that only a few of the Beatitudes originate from Jesus Himself. Based on an examination of the background and the overlapping beatitudes between Matthew and Luke, Davies and Allison suggest that only three are original—"Jesus utters three paradoxical beatitudes: blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn, and blessed are those who hunger" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 435). Others, however, suggest that at least eight of the nine can be traced to Jesus Himself. Hagner contends, "To assert that only three go back to Jesus assumes criteria that are too restrictive and presumes to know more than we can know" (Hagner, *Matthew*, 90). Blomberg suggests the possibility that "both Matthew and Luke might be excerpting from an original set of eight Beatitudes and eight woes" (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 98).

### Structure

Each of the first eight Beatitudes in Matt 5:3–10 and the first three Beatitudes in Luke 6:20–21 follow the same general structure (Hagner, *Matthew*, 89).

1. The initial "blessed are" (μακαριοι, *makarioi*) phrase.
2. The designation of those who are called "blessed."

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3. A “for/because” (ὅτι, *hoti*) clause describing the reason or ground of that blessing.

Matthew 5:11–12 breaks that pattern, although it also begins with “blessed are” and likewise contains a “for/because” clause in verse 12. The fourth Beatitude in Luke 6:22–23 also begins with “blessed are” but does not contain a “for/because” clause.

The Beatitudes as a whole form a structured introduction to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. However, some disagreement exists on how to group the Beatitudes, or how many there are. Some consider Matt 5:11–12 a separate Beatitude, extending the thought of the eighth Beatitude in Matt 5:10 (Hagner, *Matthew*, 95). Others consider the eighth Beatitude as a restatement of the ninth beatitude (Nolland, *Matthew*, 198). However, Allison argues, “The Beatitude in 5:11–12 should not be, as it sometimes is, excluded from the total number of Beatitudes” (Allison, “The Sermon on the Mount,” 429n17). The approach to the number of Beatitudes is reflected in their respective structural arrangements.

Turner divides the first eight Beatitudes into “two groups of four, with the first group emphasizing the disciple’s vertical relationship to God, the second emphasizing the disciple’s horizontal relationship to people” (Turner, “Whom Does God Approve,” 33–34). Within those two groups, each Beatitude is paired with one from the other group as follows (Turner, “Whom Does God Approve,” 34):

- (Matt 5:3)—Poor in spirit blessed because *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*
- (Matt 5:4)—Mourners blessed because *they will be comforted*
- (Matt 5:5)—Meek blessed because *they will inherit the earth*
- (Matt 5:6)—Hungry blessed because *they will be filled*
- (Matt 5:7)—Merciful blessed because *they will receive mercy*
- (Matt 5:8)—Pure blessed because *they will see God*
- (Matt 5:9)—Peacemakers blessed because *they will be called sons of God*
- (Matt 5:10)—Persecuted blessed because *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

**The first and eighth Beatitudes (Matt 5:3, 10) are paired together by virtue of the identical phrase, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven”** (αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, *autōn estin hē basileia tōn ouranōn*).

Each of the descriptors in the first four beatitudes—“poor” (πτωχοὶ, *ptōchoi*), “mourn” (πενθοῦντες, *penthoutentes*), “meek” (πραεῖς, *prais*), and “hunger” (πεινῶντες, *peinōntes*)—begin with the same letter in the Greek and describe “the persecuted (passive) condition of the disciples” (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 429).

The second four beatitudes in this scheme are then considered to be “the ethical (active) qualities leading to persecution” (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 429).

Davies and Allison disagree with the division into two groups of four; the scheme does not account for the absence of a common letter in the second four (Matt 5:7–10) and “questionably put[s] vv. 11–12 completely to one side” (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 430). Instead, the common opening word, “blessed” (μακάριοι, *makarioi*) in Matt 5:3–10 as well as 5:11, “most naturally indicates a continuation of the series” and other Jewish prayers provide “good precedent for marking the last member of a series much longer than the preceding members and for the abrupt switch from the third to second person” (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 430). In their scheme, nine proper Beatitudes should be arranged into three groups of three.

Osborne proposes a different organization of the Beatitudes, dividing them into three thematic groups (Osborne, *Matthew*, 164, following Hagner, *Matthew*, 90–91):

1. **(Matt 5:3–6)—Those who depend on God**
  - a. (Matt 5:3)—The poor in spirit
  - b. (Matt 5:4)—The mourners
  - c. (Matt 5:5)—The meek
  - d. (Matt 5:6)—The hungry and the thirsty
2. **(Matt 5:7–9)—Those who live for God**
  - a. (Matt 5:7)—The merciful
  - b. (Matt 5:8)—The pure in heart
  - c. (Matt 5:9)—The peacemakers
3. **(Matt 5:10–12)—Those who are persecuted**
  - a. (Matt 5:10)—The persecuted
  - b. (Matt 5:11–12)—The insulted and slandered

### Interpretive Approaches and Theology

A number of different approaches can be employed in interpreting the Beatitudes. They have been typically understood as primarily (1) pronouncing rewards for the virtuous, (2) signaling reversals for the unfortunate, or (3) combining elements of the two (Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes,” 460).

Some suggest the Beatitudes primarily focus on rewards for virtuous, godly behavior. Collins summarizes, “Those who are praised in the Matthean beatitudes are those whose lives reflect authentic Christian existence from the viewpoint of continuing church life” (Collins, “Beatitudes,” 631). Along the same lines, Keener says, “Jesus’ beatitudes mean that it will ultimately be

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well with those who seek first God's kingdom (Matt 6:33)" (Keener, *Matthew*, 166). Such an understanding finds its root in Judaism—"most Jewish teachers stressed rewards for righteousness ... Likewise, Jesus emphasizes rewards for righteousness (e.g., 5:11, 46; 6:1; 10:41–42) reserved in heaven (6:19–21; 19:21)" (Keener, *Matthew*, 167).

The second part of each Beatitude—set off by "for" (ὅτι, *hoti*)—signals a reward that is given to those who exhibit these characteristics. The Beatitudes serve to demonstrate "what kingdom-ready people should be like" (Keener, *Matthew*, 167). James Thompson suggests further that the second half of the beatitudes bring a focus on "entrance requirements to the kingdom"—the good news is "for those who adopt the pattern of life demanded by Jesus ... [which] fits well with the entirety of the Sermon on the Mount and the perspective of Matthew's Gospel ... [and] calls for a superior righteousness that is a prerequisite for entering the kingdom of heaven (5:20)" (Thompson, "Beatitudes in Matthew and Luke," 114).

Others suggest the Beatitudes provide an example of a new kingdom, proclaiming reversals for the unfortunate. Hagner notes that the ethical commands of the Beatitudes can only be understood in the context of a restored relationship with God—"The kingdom is declared as a reality apart from any human achievement. The Beatitudes are predicated upon the experience of the grace of God" (Hagner, *Matthew*, 96). This new reality is pronounced by the content of the Beatitudes. As Turner concludes, "the beatitudes are primarily the eschatological blessings of the kingdom, not requirements for entrance into the kingdom. One should not view the beatitudes as God's challenge for disciples to perform up to a certain standard in order to earn His approval" (Turner, "Whom Does God Approve," 29). This view goes against Thompson and others who understand the Beatitudes as depicting "entrance requirements to the kingdom."

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# The Three Kingdoms

## Christ's Kingdom

JASON C. KUO<sup>2</sup>

### Beatitude

The beatitude was an important literary form in ancient cultures. Homer's *Odyssey*, for example, contains many domestic beatitudes. A beatitude is a pronouncement of blessing, phrased in the formula "blessed is" or "blessed are." To some degree, the formal pronouncement of a blessing confers the very quality that is pronounced. There are two basic formats for a beatitude. The first is a simple pronouncement of blessing: "Blessed is he who is generous to the poor" (Prov. 14:21). The second adds the promise of a reward: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).

The book of Proverbs contains a dozen beatitudes. Here are three of them:

- "Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, / and the one who gets understanding" (3:13).
- "Blessed is the one who listens to me" (8:34).
- "Blessed is he who trusts in the LORD" (16:20).

Even when a proverb does not pronounce blessedness, as we read the Old Testament proverbs we continuously realize that the conduct and character traits that we are commanded to obey lead to blessedness, so we can say that the *spirit* of the beatitude permeates wisdom literature.

The opening section of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount gives us the famous passage known to posterity as "the beatitudes." The first one states, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). The beatitudes of Jesus are by no means limited to the Sermon on the Mount but are sprinkled throughout the Gospels, where they are often referred to as the sayings of Jesus.

What are the interpretive implications that attach to the beatitude? Before we analyze a beatitude, we need to receive it and let its impact settle into our mind and heart. It is momentous to receive the blessing of God, and the evocative form of the beatitude highlights that. We need first to receive the blessing and let it bathe us. Additionally, a beatitude carries with it an implied command to emulate the type of character on whom the blessing is pronounced, so we can receive a beatitude with a resolve to be in the group that is named as being eligible for the blessing that is pronounced.

In addition to these elements of reception and resolve, we need to note the precise nature of the beatitude. It might be a simple pronouncement of blessing, or it might combine that with a promised reward. Then we need to ponder the exact nature of the person who is said to be blessed, and the exact nature of the reward (if one is stated).

Finally, we need to be aware of a slight difference between the Old Testament beatitude and the New Testament one. The beatitudes in the Old Testament wisdom literature are statements of blessing only, unaccompanied by a reward. The general tenor of these proverbs is that they pronounce blessing on those in the believing community who live under God's covenant rule. The nature of the blessing is left unstated.

By contrast, many New Testament beatitudes are accompanied by a promised reward, and the important thing about that reward is that usually it is eschatological in nature, to be fulfilled in the age to come. James 1:12 illustrates this type (as do Jesus' beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount): "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."

### LEARNING BY DOING

The following four proverbs will enable you to apply what has just been presented. The second two are not phrased as beatitudes, but they operate in a way similar to that of beatitudes. You can profitably analyze what aspects of a beatitude can be applied to the proverbs that commend a certain person or behavior without pronouncing a blessing.

- "Blessed is he who keeps the law" (Prov. 29:18).
- "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).
- "He who finds a wife finds a good thing / and obtains favor from the LORD" (Prov. 18:22).
- "A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:18).

3

### Beatitude

<sup>2</sup> Kuo, J. C. (2016). [Beatitudes](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>3</sup> Ryken, L. (2016). [Short Sentences Long Remembered: A Guided Study of Proverbs and Other Wisdom Literature](#) (pp. 90–92). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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It is an easy transition from the idea of subversion or challenge to conventional thinking to the beatitudes in the Gospels. A beatitude is a pronouncement of blessing, phrased in the formula “blessed is” or “blessed are.” The following specimen illustrates the basic form of a beatitude: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). The most customary format for a beatitude is a construction consisting of two phrases: the condition that is said to lead to blessedness, and the result or reward of that condition. Nonetheless, it is the pronouncement of blessing that is the essential feature of a beatitude, which does not require the addition of a promise of reward.

How major a form is the beatitude in the Gospels? There are approximately thirty beatitudes in the Gospels, some of them duplicated from one Gospel to another. It might seem that a beatitude would not be subversive, but it often is in the Gospels.

To see how this plays out, we need to set the New Testament beatitude against the backdrop of the Old Testament beatitude. The Old Testament beatitude pronounces blessings in this life for the godly and moral person who lives by the norms of God’s believing community. “Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with [children]” (Ps. 127:5). “Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts [i.e., in the temple]” (Ps. 65:4). Psalm 1 can serve as summary: it pronounces blessing on the godly person, whose reward is that he leads a productive life (v. 3) and prospers “in all that he does” (v. 3).

The beatitudes in the Gospels continue to praise the same character traits and spiritual virtues that are praised in the Old Testament, but the promised rewards are overwhelmingly spiritual and eschatological (to be fulfilled in the life to come). “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3). “Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes” (Luke 12:37). “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15). These apocalyptic beatitudes have an element that challenges the focus on earthly blessing in this life that we find in the Old Testament beatitudes.

### Summary

This chapter has been a kaleidoscope of particularized genres and rhetorical forms found in the Gospels. This can serve as a bookend to claims made in the introduction to this guide that the Gospels are mixed-genre books and hybrid forms. Intervening chapters have multiplied the genres and other literary forms found in the Gospels.<sup>4</sup>

**BEATITUDES** The group of “blessed are” statements that open the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5:3–12. The term also refers to the four “blessed are” statements that open the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6:20–23. The word “beatitude” originates from the Latin word *beatitudo* (Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 92). They are also called “macarisms,” a label that corresponds to the Greek word usually translated “blessed” (μακαριοι, *makarios*) that begins each of the beatitudes.

### Form and Source

The form of the statements in the Beatitudes has parallels in ancient Egyptian literature, Hellenistic literature, the Old Testament, and was used by rabbis (Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 92; Hagner, *Matthew*, 88). The Greek translation of various passages in the Old Testament use the identical opening noun “blessed,” followed by a noun as the object (with an implied verb)—“Blessed [is] the man” (Μακαριοι, *Makarios anēr*) (e.g., Psa 1:1 LXX; compare 2:12; 31:2, 12; 33:9; Prov 3:13; 8:34; 20:7; Eccl 10:17; Job 5:17; Isa 30:18). The beatitude form also finds parallels in deuterocanonical literature (Tob 13:14; Wis 3:13; Sir 14:1; 25:8; 31:8; Pss. Sol. 4:23). Beatitudes are also found 28 times throughout the New Testament outside of Matt 5:3–10 and Luke 6:20–23 (e.g., Matt 11:6; 13:16; Luke 1:45; 7:23; 11:27; John 20:29; Rom 4:7–8; Jas 1:12; Rev 1:3; 22:7). However, Matthew 5:3–12 and Luke 6:20–23 stand apart: “Extended lists of beatitudes are rare in biblical and other early Jewish sources” (Nolland, *Matthew*, 197).

Some believe that only a few of the Beatitudes originate from Jesus Himself. Based on an examination of the background and the overlapping beatitudes between Matthew and Luke, Davies and Allison suggest that only three are original—“Jesus utters three paradoxical beatitudes: blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn, and blessed are those who hunger” (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 435). Others, however, suggest that at least eight of the nine can be traced to Jesus Himself. Hagner contends, “To assert that only three go back to Jesus assumes criteria that are too restrictive and presumes to know more than we can know” (Hagner, *Matthew*, 90). Blomberg suggests the possibility that “both Matthew and Luke might be excerpting from an original set of eight Beatitudes and eight woes” (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 98).

### Structure

Each of the first eight Beatitudes in Matt 5:3–10 and the first three Beatitudes in Luke 6:20–21 follow the same general structure (Hagner, *Matthew*, 89).

1. The initial “blessed are” (μακαριοι, *makarioi*) phrase.
2. The designation of those who are called “blessed.”
3. A “for/because” (οτι, *hoti*) clause describing the reason or ground of that blessing.

<sup>4</sup> Ryken, L. (2016). *Jesus the Hero: A Guided Literary Study of the Gospels* (pp. 132–133). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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Matthew 5:11–12 breaks that pattern, although it also begins with “blessed are” and likewise contains a “for/because” clause in verse 12. The fourth Beatitude in Luke 6:22–23 also begins with “blessed are” but does not contain a “for/because” clause.

The Beatitudes as a whole form a structured introduction to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. However, some disagreement exists on how to group the Beatitudes, or how many there are. Some consider Matt 5:11–12 a separate Beatitude, extending the thought of the eighth Beatitude in Matt 5:10 (Hagner, *Matthew*, 95). Others consider the eighth Beatitude as a restatement of the ninth beatitude (Nolland, *Matthew*, 198). However, Allison argues, “The Beatitude in 5:11–12 should not be, as it sometimes is, excluded from the total number of Beatitudes” (Allison, “The Sermon on the Mount,” 429n17). The approach to the number of Beatitudes is reflected in their respective structural arrangements.

Turner divides the first eight Beatitudes into “two groups of four, with the first group emphasizing the disciple’s vertical relationship to God, the second emphasizing the disciple’s horizontal relationship to people” (Turner, “Whom Does God Approve,” 33–34). Within those two groups, each Beatitude is paired with one from the other group as follows (Turner, “Whom Does God Approve,” 34):

- (Matt 5:3)—Poor in spirit blessed because *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*
- (Matt 5:4)—Mourners blessed because *they will be comforted*
- (Matt 5:5)—Meek blessed because *they will inherit the earth*
- (Matt 5:6)—Hungry blessed because *they will be filled*
- (Matt 5:7)—Merciful blessed because *they will receive mercy*
- (Matt 5:8)—Pure blessed because *they will see God*
- (Matt 5:9)—Peacemakers blessed because *they will be called sons of God*
- (Matt 5:10)—Persecuted blessed because *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

The first and eighth Beatitudes (Matt 5:3, 10) are paired together by virtue of the identical phrase, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (αὐτῶν ἐστὶν τὸ βασίλειον οὐρανῶν, *autōn estin hē basileia tōn ouranōn*). Each of the descriptors in the first four beatitudes—“poor” (πτωχοὶ, *ptōchoi*), “mourn” (πενθηταί, *penthontes*), “meek” (πραεῖς, *prais*), and “hunger” (πεινῶντες, *peinōntes*)—begin with the same letter in the Greek and describe “the persecuted (passive) condition of the disciples” (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 429). The second four beatitudes in this scheme are then considered to be “the ethical (active) qualities leading to persecution” (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 429).

Davies and Allison disagree with the division into two groups of four; the scheme does not account for the absence of a common letter in the second four (Matt 5:7–10) and “questionably put[s] vv. 11–12 completely to one side” (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 430). Instead, the common opening word, “blessed” (μακάριοι, *makarioi*) in Matt 5:3–10 as well as 5:11, “most naturally indicates a continuation of the series” and other Jewish prayers provide “good precedent for marking the last member of a series much longer than the preceding members and for the abrupt switch from the third to second person” (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 430). In their scheme, nine proper Beatitudes should be arranged into three groups of three.

Osborne proposes a different organization of the Beatitudes, dividing them into three thematic groups (Osborne, *Matthew*, 164, following Hagner, *Matthew*, 90–91):

1. (Matt 5:3–6)—Those who depend on God
  - a. (Matt 5:3)—The poor in spirit
  - b. (Matt 5:4)—The mourners
  - c. (Matt 5:5)—The meek
  - d. (Matt 5:6)—The hungry and the thirsty
2. (Matt 5:7–9)—Those who live for God
  - a. (Matt 5:7)—The merciful
  - b. (Matt 5:8)—The pure in heart
  - c. (Matt 5:9)—The peacemakers
3. (Matt 5:10–12)—Those who are persecuted
  - a. (Matt 5:10)—The persecuted
  - b. (Matt 5:11–12)—The insulted and slandered

### Interpretive Approaches and Theology

A number of different approaches can be employed in interpreting the Beatitudes. They have been typically understood as primarily (1) pronouncing rewards for the virtuous, (2) signaling reversals for the unfortunate, or (3) combining elements of the two (Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes,” 460).

Some suggest the Beatitudes primarily focus on rewards for virtuous, godly behavior. Collins summarizes, “Those who are praised in the Matthean beatitudes are those whose lives reflect authentic Christian existence from the viewpoint of continuing church life” (Collins, “Beatitudes,” 631). Along the same lines, Keener says, “Jesus’ beatitudes mean that it will ultimately be well with those who seek first God’s kingdom (Matt 6:33)” (Keener, *Matthew*, 166). Such an understanding finds its root in Judaism—“most Jewish teachers stressed rewards for righteousness ... Likewise, Jesus emphasizes rewards for righteousness (e.g., 5:11, 46; 6:1; 10:41–42) reserved in heaven (6:19–21; 19:21)” (Keener, *Matthew*, 167).

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## Christ's Kingdom

JASON C. KUO<sup>5</sup>

### Parables

#### I. Understand what a parable is and why Christ used them.

##### What:

Parable: Story or Illustration told to make a specific point.  
fable, story, moral tale, tale, folk tale, legend, allegory

(Gk. *parabole*, lit. “a placing beside”)

A parable is a lesson from daily life that teaches a spiritual truth. Jesus often told parables to provide an understanding of life, especially life in God's kingdom. **Thirty-five percent of all gospel teaching is written in parables.** Effective teaching method.

Jesus used parables to teach about God's Kingdom.

42 stories told by Christ to illustrate a truth.

Additional 33 brief sayings and metaphors.

Christ, himself, identified certain stories w/the Kingdom and the gospels identify these as parables.

7 of these are in Matthew 13 (Mark and Luke)

KINGDOM PARABLES

9 PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING (only in Matthew)

Kingdom Values next week

##### So Why:

Mark 4: 10-12

<sup>10</sup> Later, when Jesus was alone with the twelve disciples and with the others who were gathered around, they asked him, “What do your stories mean?”

<sup>11</sup> He replied, “You are permitted to understand the secret about the Kingdom of God. But I am using these stories to conceal everything about it from outsiders, <sup>12</sup> so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled:

‘They see what I do,

but they don't perceive its meaning.

They hear my words,

but they don't understand.

So they will not turn from their sins

and be forgiven.\*” (Isaiah 6:9-10)

NKJ

<sup>10</sup> cBut when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. <sup>11</sup> And He said to them, “To you it has been given to <sup>d</sup>know the <sup>4</sup>mystery of the kingdom of God; but to <sup>e</sup>those who are outside, all things come in parables, <sup>12</sup> so that

<sup>f</sup>Seeing they may see and not perceive,

*And hearing they may hear and not understand;*

Lest they should turn,

*And their sins be forgiven them.”*

#### Matthew 13:34

<sup>34</sup> Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables. <sup>35</sup> This fulfilled the prophecy that said,

<sup>5</sup> Kuo, J. C. (2016). [Beatitudes](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

“I will speak to you in parables.

I will explain mysteries hidden since the creation of the world.” Psalm 78:2

Two thoughts on this:

1. Gracious = That Christ would speak in ways so those who did not want to know Him would be confused and would not be judged for failure to respond to what He taught.
2. Judicial = Their refusal to acknowledge Christ as the messiah. He preached the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-7:29) outlining the choice they needed to make.\*

**\*5:1–7:29 The Sermon on the Mount** is the first in a series of five discourses about the Christian life, both present and future. Its basic premise is that the Christian life has no neutral zones free from God. The Lord is sovereign, all-powerful, and omnipresent. Believers do not *make* Him the Sovereign or Lord of their lives; He already *is*. Whether or not they are living as His subjects does not affect His sovereignty; their obedience or lack of it simply determines what kind of kingdom subjects they are.

He did miracles.

John the Baptist announced Christ was the messiah.

Christ stated He was the messiah and, still, they doubted.

This is when Christ began to speak in parables. When they refused to acknowledge Him and by their choice, they went their own way.

Jesus' parables were a teaching method designed to reveal spiritual truths in such a way that those who wanted to respond would understand and receive more (vv. 9, 12, 43). Those who chose not to respond would not completely understand, and what little understanding they did have would disappear.

### II. Dissect parables to find information about the Kingdom of God.

(Matthew 13 – Kingdom of Heaven as the Jewish readers avoided using God's name.)

The Parable	Expected Form	Unexpected Form
The Sower 13:3–9, 18–23	Messiah turns Israel and all nations to Himself.	Individuals respond differently to the Word's invitation.
Wheat/Tares vv. 24–30, 37–43	The kingdom's righteous citizens rule over the world with the King.	The kingdom's citizens are among the men of the world, growing together until God's harvest time.
Mustard Seed vv. 31–32	Kingdom begins in majestic glory.	Kingdom begins in insignificance; its greatness comes as a surprise.
Leaven v. 33	Only righteousness enters the kingdom; other "raw material" is excluded.	The kingdom is implanted in a different "raw material" and grows to fill the whole personality with righteousness.
Hidden Treasure v. 44	Kingdom is public and for all.	Kingdom is hidden for individual "purchase."
Priceless Pearl vv. 45, 46	Kingdom brings all valued things to men.	Kingdom demands abandonment of all values.
The Dragnet vv. 47–50	Kingdom begins with initial separation of righteous and unrighteous.	Kingdom ends with final separation of the unrighteous from righteous.

**WOMEN AND THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

The Three Kingdoms  
Christ's Kingdom

<b>Parable</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Application</b>
The lamp under a basket (Matt. 5:14–16; Mark 4:21, 22; Luke 8:16, 17).	To the disciples.	Life and words should give personal testimony to God's redemptive and transforming grace.
The marriage (Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19, 20; Luke 5:34, 35).	To the Pharisees and the disciples of John.	Joy will be found in Christ's companionship.
The patched garment (Matt. 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36).	To the Pharisees and the disciples of John.	Jesus did not come to adapt to the old order of legalism but to make all things new.
The children in the marketplace (Matt. 11:16, 17; Luke 7:31, 32).	To the multitudes concerning John the Baptist.	Those who rejected Jesus and John could not be pleased. Beware of focusing on personal whims.
The leaven (Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20, 21).	To the multitude on the seashore.	Beware of sin that makes its way into life to corrupt and draw away from the good and true.
The pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45, 46).	To the disciples.	The relative value of the gospel exceeded all else.
The wedding garment (Matt. 22:10–14).	To the chief priests and the Pharisees.	Keep your life pure and holy.
The wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1–13).	To the disciples on the Mount of Olives.	Always be prepared and watchful.
The wedding feast (Matt. 22:2–9; Luke 14:16–23).	To the chief priests and the Pharisees.	Do not reject God's invitation to salvation.
The lost coin** (Luke 15:8–10).	To the Pharisees and scribes.	Remember Christ's love for sinners and His determination to draw them to Himself.
The persistent widow (Luke 18:1–8).	To the disciples.	Persevere in prayer.
**Biblical women often wore a <i>frontlet</i> (Heb. <i>semedi</i> ) on their foreheads. This adornment was made of coins (perhaps part of the woman's dowry) and signified betrothal or marriage. The monetary value of the coins was not as important as the sentimental value and symbolism of commitment.		

Week 4: Principles for Kingdom Living (Kingdom Values, The Kingdom of Me)

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

Matthew 18:1-9	Humility
Matthew 18: 21-35	Unforgiving Servant (Forgiveness)
Matthew 20:1-16 1.)	Generous Landowner (Reward is up to God. Whether you've known Him 15 yrs or 1.)
Matthew 21:33-46	Possessing God's stuff w/o treating it as His. Self centered belief.
Matthew 22: 1-14	Marriage Feast (No favorites. Invitation to Heaven given to all.)
Matthew 25: 1-13	Ten Virgins (Anticipate, Prepare, Watch)
Matthew 25:14-30	The Talents
Matthew 25: 31-46	How you treat His children is How you treat Him.
Luke 19:11-27	You are held accountable to invest, use, care for the talents He gives you/sends you

Extra:

Kingdom Sayings

Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28

Matthew 11:12, Luke 16:16

Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20

Matthew 16:19

Matthew 18: 1-4; Mark 9:36,37; 10:15; Luke 9:47,48; 18:17

Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17

Mark 9:1; Matthew 16:28; Luke 9:27

(Matthew 13:10-17)

Insight(Matthew 13:11)

Prepare us for truth of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:12-13)

Bless those who heard them (Matt 13:16)

Jesus' first words on Kingdom Principles: Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

### **SESSION III**

#### **There Is No Place Like Home: Understanding His Kingdom**

OPENING:

Title misleading: very hard to understand

Clarifying the best we can

- Things like:

Persistent prayer is valued by God.

Joy grows in the presence of JC.

Forgiveness brings freedom. (Jas 2:12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom,)

You are given talents and expected to use them.

How you treat His children is how you treat Him.

Humility is highly valued.

We respond to His kingdom as individuals and held accountable as individuals.

His kingdom demands we value it the most, we must abandoned all other values in the face of this.

*Hence, the New Attitude*

Established this weekend:

- Eternity is a given: spiritual beings having a physical experience
- We live in the enemy's territory
- Where we live it is our choice (freewill)

One more:

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

- Due to the resurrection, we can experience eternal praxis, eternal established practices here on earth.

POWER POINT: Ask for diagram:  
Walk through the diagram  
(take the s off Revelation)

From the creation of time to the end of time, God exist  
The time continuum does not stop, pause, or hiccup.  
Time is and was and will be = eternity

but our access to it changes  
OT – knew God from duty, from a distance  
NT –Touch Christ, for a while

RESURRECTION – everything changed  
For the first time, perfection lived here on earth (100% God, 100% Man. Proved we can do it, with His help) Saying 'I will submit to death' so He could override it's power.  
Christ's spirit went into to Hades to preach the good news to OT people  
Third day he came back up, grabbed His body, and hung out for 40 days or so w/believers  
Ascended into heaven

First time ever, a human being died (physical reality) but His Spirit was 100% pure and active and was not bound by sin, having to stay in Hades and wait for help

First time ever, the Spirit had the power to override a physical & eternal reality.  
Changed the course of history.

**The realities of the KoG have been ushered here, into the present age!**

### I. WHAT is the Kingdom of God?

Use: Colossians 1:13

"For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

#### **THE DEFINITION**

ASK: What is the KoG?

His church  
His people

ASK: When will it come?

ASK: How will it come?

- Theories:

Subjective: (Adolf von Harnack)

KoG = Inward power which enters a human soul and takes hold of it.

Apocalyptic: (Albert Schweitzer, African Missionary)

KoG = Will be inaugurated by a supernatural force when history will cease and heaven will begin.

The Church:

As the church grows, the kingdom grows and is extended into the world.  
Essential to offer personal salvations.

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

### Societal Pattern:

An ideal pattern, if followed, society will be well.

Not concerned with individual salvations or with the future, but present.

- Scriptures:

### O.T.:

Isaiah 2:4

“He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

Isaiah 11:6-11

“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people.....”

### N.T.:

After the imprisonment of John the Baptist, Jesus moved to Galilee (Capernum).

Matthew 4:17

“From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

5:20

“For I tell you unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

7:21

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

13:11

“He replied, ‘The knowledge of the secret of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.’ (This is why he speaks in parables.)

6:10

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Luke 22:24-30

“A dispute rose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

Matthew 25:31,34

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separate the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then, the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and came to visit me.’”

Present:

Romans 14:17

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or drinking but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,”

Future:

Matthew 25:34

“Then, the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’”

Realm:

Present: (Which we are now in, as Christians)

Colossians 1:13

“delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”

Luke 17:20,21

“The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Lo, here it is!’ or ‘There’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

Future:

2 Peter 1:11

“will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Matthew 8:11

“Many will come from the east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 12:41,43

“will gather out of his kingdom all cases of sin and all evil doers...then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

SO...What is the KoG?

Western ideology = A realm over which a king exercises his authority.

“A state or monarchy the head which is a king; dominion; realm”

OR

The people belonging to that realm.

Webster:

**king·dom** [kɪŋdəm]

*n*

1. **monarch's territory:** a state or people ruled over by a king or queen

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

2. **sphere of activity:** a realm or area of activity in which a particular thing is thought to dominate  
■ *the kingdom of professional tennis*
3. SCIENCE **highest classification for natural things:** any of the three groups, animal, vegetable, and mineral, into which natural organisms and objects are traditionally, as opposed to scientifically, divided

Kingdom may be:

A realm over which a sovereign exercises his authority

A people who belong to that realm

This subject can become so confusing because we do not embrace the complete definition:

The rank, quality, state, or attributes of a king; royal authority, dominion; monarchy; kingship.

Hebrew: Malkuth

Greek: Basileia

Both = the rank, authority, and sovereignty exercised by a king.

Secondary meanings

Primary = the authority to rule, the sovereignty of the king

Reign

Psalm 103:19

The Lord establishes his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all."

Psalm 145:11

"They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might."

Psalm 145:13

"Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endure through all generations."

Daniel 2:37

"You, oh king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory;"

\*Luke 19:11-27 (Parable of the ten minas (reap what you did not sow, ten minas)

"While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: 'A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money in order to find out what they had gained with it. 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow. His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas. 'Sir', they said, 'he already has ten!' He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will

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be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them – bring them here and kill them in front of me.”

Believe, seek, act prepares the groundwork for growth of more belief which leads to more seeking which leads to more action.

(right before the triumphal entry)

What was the noble man seeking?

A realm?

Servants? People to rule?

Authority.

Mark 10:15

“I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

What are we receiving?

Matthew 6:33

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be to you as well.”

(what shall we eat, drink, wear)

What are we seeking?

The kingdom of God is not just heaven, a place.

Or the church, his people.

They are meaningless w/o AUTHORITY

Which has been handed down to us via JC

(find scriptures where)

?matt. 10:5-8

Matt. 28:18

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” JC

~~Some passages refer to the KoG as a realm, place~~

~~Some as a present reality~~

~~Some as a future reality~~

~~And it is all three~~

**II. What are we to do with it?**

(second h.o.)

Spend your life time learning, living, exercising in it.

LIVE scripture

Wrap up three sessions:

Closing prayer:

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

John 17:15-

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”

Some promises are require future praxis.

Some promises are immediate, present praxis.

**Live** scripture

When it tells us to forgive, we struggle and forgive

Tithe

Pray

Pray for healing & then trust

Wait on God

Sometime it takes the supernatural to do this

John 14:23

“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

Vs 25

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

Remind you of the book ends:

Love....Self Control.

Greater things than these John 14:12

1 Jn 5:12 “He who has the son has life, who has not the son has not life.”

So let's ACT like it!

Ephesians 3:10-11

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. therefore go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matt 18:18

Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, loose...

John 20:21

Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’”

Luke 9:1-6 & 10:1-20

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

### Commissioning of the 12 & 70

Luke 22:24-30

“A dispute rose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”

Heirs Ephesians 2:19-22

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. and in him you, too, are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

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While Jesus began teaching His disciples about the authority He was giving them, the victory was not fully realized until the Cross. Look up these verses on our authority in Christ: Luke 10:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:20–22; 2:6. Where are we seated? Colossians 2:10, 13–15

#### **KINGDOM EXTRA**

Colossians 2:13–15 tells us that Jesus Christ’s triumph over sin and evil powers was accomplished in “it”—that is, in *the Cross*. This text, joined to and studied beside others (Eph. 2:13–16; Gal. 3:13, 14; 2 Cor. 5:14–17; Rom. 5:6–15; and Rev. 12:10, 11), firmly establishes Jesus’ suffering, shed blood, sacrificial death, and resurrection triumph as the only adequate and available ground for ransom from sin, reconciliation to God, redemption from slavery, and restoration. The Cross is the sole hope and means for full reinstatement to relationship with God and rulership under Him—to “reign in life” (Rom. 5:17). To avoid presumption or imbalance regarding the message and ministry of the present power of the kingdom of God, we must focus on and regularly review two points; the source and the grounds for the delegation of such authority and power. 1) God’s sovereign authority and almighty power is the source from which mankind derives any ability to share in the exercise of God’s kingdom power. 2) But even more important, seeing sinful, fallen man had lost all claim to his early privilege of rulership under God, let us remember the *grounds* upon which all kingdom privilege or power may be restored and by which such spiritual ministry with authority may be exercised.<sup>8</sup>

### **Jesus gave us dominion over the demonic realm**

To those who feel that we should not use the personal pronoun “I” but instead ask the Lord to silence evil spirits, my answer is simple and biblical: Nowhere in Scripture is that procedure taught nor practiced. It sounds very pious but it is erroneous.

Jesus gives us authority over the demonic realm. We do not need to ask for what is already given. That such authority is given to all God’s servants is clear in that it was not only given to the twelve apostles (Luke 9:4) but also to the seventy other disciples (Luke 10:1f). Since they were disciples of Jesus but not part of the apostolic band, they can be seen as representatives of Christians in general.<sup>10</sup>

When the seventy returned from their witnessing ministry, they were not bashful in referring to *their* authority over demons as it was evidenced in their ministry. They exclaimed, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name” (Luke 10:17).

Jesus, far from rebuking them for “arrogance,” affirmed their words. After declaring the fall of Satan that He beheld in the spirit realm, which was evidently directly connected to their ministry (v. 18), He joyfully declared, “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents [interesting in light of Genesis 3!] and scorpions [Rev. 9:1–11], and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (v. 19). Their authority,

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<sup>8</sup>Hayford, J. W. 1997, c1996. *Praying in the Spirit : Heavenly resources for praise and intercession*. C1996 by Jack W. Hayford. Spirit-Filled Life Kingdom Dynamics Study Guides. Thomas Nelson: Nashville

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*exousia*, delegated to them by Jesus Himself, was greater than the power, *dunamis*, of the enemy. They had nothing to fear (v. 19).

The only caution Jesus laid upon them was to maintain balance in their life, ministry, and priorities. While it was a cause of rejoicing to know that the enemy was subject to them (vv. 17–18), it was more important to rejoice in their relationship to God and His kingdom (v. 20).

In the only case outside of the Gospels where the Scriptures describe a one-on-one deliverance “session” from demonization (Acts 16), the apostle Paul followed the exact pattern of deliverance ministry practiced by the seventy. To the demons afflicting the slave girl of Philippi he declared, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” Luke writes, “And he came out that very hour.”<sup>7</sup>

### Kingdom of God

**Q1: What is the Kingdom of God?** (write on tablet)

#### **Psalm 103:19**

*The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.*

#### **Psalm 11:1-7**

*I trust in the Lord for protection.*

*So why do you say to me,*

*“Fly like a bird to the mountains for safety!*

<sup>2</sup>*The wicked are stringing their bows*

*and fitting their arrows on the bowstrings.*

*They shoot from the shadows*

*at those whose hearts are right.*

<sup>3</sup>*The foundations of law and order have collapsed.*

*What can the righteous do?”*

<sup>4</sup>*But the Lord is in his holy Temple;*

*the Lord still rules from heaven.*

*He watches everyone closely,*

*examining every person on earth.*

<sup>5</sup>*The Lord examines both the righteous and the wicked.*

*He hates those who love violence.*

<sup>6</sup>*He will rain down blazing coals and burning sulfur on the wicked,*

*punishing them with scorching winds.*

<sup>7</sup>*For the righteous Lord loves justice.*

*The virtuous will see his face.*

#### **Psalm 47:1-9** *Clap your hands, all you peoples;*

*shout to God with a jubilant cry.*

<sup>2</sup>*For Yahweh, the Most High, is awe-inspiring,*

*a great King over all the earth.*

<sup>3</sup>*He subdues peoples under us*

*and nations under our feet.*

<sup>4</sup>*He chooses for us our inheritance—*

*the pride of Jacob, whom He loves. Selah*

<sup>5</sup>*God ascends among shouts of joy,*

*the Lord, among the sound of trumpets.*

<sup>6</sup>*Sing praise to God, sing praise;*

*sing praise to our King, sing praise!*

<sup>7</sup>*Sing a song of wisdom,<sup>[a]</sup>*

*for God is King of all the earth.*

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<sup>7</sup>Murphy, E. F. 1997, c1996. *Handbook for spiritual warfare* (Page 36). Thomas Nelson: Nashville

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

<sup>8</sup> *God reigns over the nations;  
God is seated on His holy throne.  
<sup>9</sup> The nobles of the peoples have assembled  
with the people of the God of Abraham.  
For the leaders<sup>[b]</sup> of the earth belong to God;*

### **Daniel 4:3**

*How great are His miracles, and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom,  
and His dominion is from generation to generation.*

### **Isaiah 25:1**

*Yahweh, You are my God; I will exalt You. I will praise Your name, for You have accomplished wonders, plans  
formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.*

### **Daniel 2:44**

<sup>44</sup> *“In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, and this kingdom  
will not be left to another people. It will crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself endure  
forever.*

### **John 3:5-7**

<sup>5</sup> *Jesus answered, “I assure you: Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of  
God. <sup>6</sup> Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not be amazed that I  
told you that you must be born again.*

### **Psalms 145:13**

<sup>13</sup> *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; Your rule is for all generations. The Lord is faithful in all His words and  
gracious in all His actions.*

### **Daniel 6:26**

<sup>26</sup> *I issue a decree that in all my royal dominion, people must tremble in fear before the God of Daniel:*

*For He is the living God, and He endures forever; His kingdom will never be destroyed, and His dominion has no  
end. **Daniel 7:13-14***

<sup>13</sup> *I continued watching in the night visions,*

*and I saw One like a son of man  
coming with the clouds of heaven.  
He approached the Ancient of Days  
and was escorted before Him.*

<sup>14</sup> *He was given authority to rule,  
and glory, and a kingdom;  
so that those of every people,  
nation, and language  
should serve Him.*

*His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
that will not pass away,  
and His kingdom is one  
that will not be destroyed.*

### **Matthew 16:27-28**

<sup>27</sup> *For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will reward each  
according to what he has done.*

### **Hebrews 12:25-28**

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<sup>25</sup> Be careful that you do not refuse to listen to the One who is speaking. For if the people of Israel did not escape when they refused to listen to Moses, the earthly messenger, we will certainly not escape if we reject the One who speaks to us from heaven! <sup>26</sup> When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: "Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also." <sup>27</sup> This means that all of creation will be shaken and removed, so that only unshakable things will remain.

<sup>28</sup> Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. <sup>29</sup> For our God is a devouring fire.

The kingdom of God is the rule of an eternal sovereign God over all creatures and things, natural and supernatural.

The kingdom of God is also the designation for the sphere of salvation entered into at the new birth (John 3:5–7), and is synonymous with the "kingdom of heaven."

The kingdom of God embraces all created intelligence, both in heaven and earth that are willingly subject to the Lord and are in fellowship with Him. The kingdom of God is, therefore, universal in that it includes created angels and men. It is eternal, as God is eternal, and it is spiritual—found within all born-again believers. We enter the kingdom of God when we are born again, and we are then part of that kingdom for eternity. It is a relationship "born of the spirit" (John 3:5), and we have confident assurance that it is so because the Spirit bears witness with our spirits (Romans 8:16).

God is sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient and the ruler over all of His creation. However, the designation "the kingdom of God" compasses that realm which is subject to God and will be for eternity. The rest of creation will be destroyed. Only that which is part of the "kingdom of God" will remain.<sup>8</sup>

(a)

**Matthew 24:30** "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the peoples of the earth...

**Luke 21:27** Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

**Acts 7:56** "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

**Revelation 1:7** Look! He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, including those who pierced Him...

**Revelation 1:13** and among the lampstands was One like the Son of Man, dressed in a long robe and with a gold...

**Revelation 14:14** Then I looked, and there was a white cloud, and One like the Son of Man was seated on the cloud...

(b)

**Matthew 26:64** "You have said it," Jesus told him. "But I tell you, in the future you will see the Son of Man...

**Mark 13:26** Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

**Mark 14:62** "I am," said Jesus, "and all of you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the..."

(c)

**John 3:35** The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hands.

**1 Corinthians 15:27** For God has put everything under His feet. But when it says "everything" is put under Him, it is...

**Ephesians 1:20-22** He demonstrated this power in the Messiah by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His...

**Philippians 2:9** For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name,

**Revelation 1:6** and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—the glory and dominion are His forever and...

**Revelation 11:15** The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying: The kingdom of...

(d)

**Psalms 72:11** Let all kings bow down to him, all nations serve him.

**Psalms 102:22** when peoples and kingdoms are assembled to serve the Lord.

(e)

**Daniel 3:17-18** If the God we serve exists, then He can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He can...

**Daniel 3:28** Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent His..."

**Daniel 6:17** A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed it with his own signet...

**Daniel 6:21** Then Daniel spoke with the king: "May the king live forever.

**Daniel 7:27** The kingdom, dominion, and greatness of the kingdoms under all of heaven will be given to the...

### KINGDOM OF GOD

<sup>8</sup> Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

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*Matt 6:33* But seek first the *kingdom of God* and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you

*Matt 12:28* But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the *kingdom of God* has come upon you

*Matt 19:24* And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the *kingdom of God*

*Matt 21:31* Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you

*Matt 21:43* Therefore I say to you, the *kingdom of God* will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it

*Mark 1:14* Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the *kingdom of God*

*Mark 1:15* and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the *kingdom of God* is at hand

*Mark 4:11* And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the *kingdom of God*

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

*Mark 4:30* And He said, "To what shall we liken the *kingdom of God*

*Mark 9:1* And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the *kingdom of God* present with power

*Mark 9:47* It is better for you to enter the *kingdom of God* with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire

*Mark 10:14* But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the *kingdom of God*

*Mark 10:15* Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the *kingdom of God* as a little child will by no means enter it

*Mark 10:23* Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the *kingdom of God*

*Mark 10:24* But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the *kingdom of God*

*Mark 10:25* It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the *kingdom of God*

*Mark 12:34* So when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the *kingdom of God*

*Mark 14:25* Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the *kingdom of God*

*Mark 15:43* Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the *kingdom of God*, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus

*Luke 4:43* but He said to them, "I must preach the *kingdom of God* to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent

*Luke 6:20* Blessed are you poor, for yours is the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 7:28* but he who is least in the *kingdom of God* is greater than he

*Luke 8:1* Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 8:10* And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the *kingdom of God*, but to the rest it is given in parables, that

*Luke 9:2* He sent them to preach the *kingdom of God* and to heal the sick

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

*Luke 9:11* and He received them and spoke to them about the *kingdom of God*, and healed those who had need of healing

*Luke 9:27* But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 9:60* Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 9:62* But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 10:9* And heal the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The *kingdom of God* has come near to you

*Luke 10:11* Nevertheless know this, that the *kingdom of God* has come near you

*Luke 11:20* But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the *kingdom of God* has come upon you

*Luke 12:31* But seek the *kingdom of God*, and all these things shall be added to you

*Luke 13:18* Then He said, "What is the *kingdom of God* like

*Luke 13:20* And again He said, "To what shall I liken the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 13:28* There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the *kingdom of God*, and yourselves thrust out

*Luke 13:29* They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 14:15* Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 16:16* Since that time the *kingdom of God* has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it

*Luke 17:20* Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the *kingdom of God* would come, He answered them and said, "The *kingdom of God* does not come with observation

*Luke 17:21* For indeed, the *kingdom of God* is within you

*Luke 18:16* But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 18:17* Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the *kingdom of God* as a little child will by no means enter it

*Luke 18:24* And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 18:25* For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 18:29* So He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 19:11* Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the *kingdom of God* would appear immediately

*Luke 21:31* So you, likewise, when you see these things happening, know that the *kingdom of God* is near

*Luke 22:16* for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the *kingdom of God*

*Luke 22:18* for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the *kingdom of God* comes

*Luke 23:51* He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the *kingdom of God*

*John 3:3* Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the *kingdom of God*

*John 3:5* Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the *kingdom of God*

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- Acts 1:3* to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the *kingdom of God*
- Acts 8:12* But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the *kingdom of God* and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized
- Acts 14:22* strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the *kingdom of God*
- Acts 19:8* And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the *kingdom Of God*
- Acts 20:25* And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the *kingdom of God*, will see my face no more
- Acts 28:23* So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the *kingdom of God*, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening
- Acts 28:31* preaching the *kingdom of God* and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him
- Rom 14:17* for the *kingdom of God* is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit
- 1Cor 4:20* For the *kingdom of God* is not in word but in power
- 1Cor 6:9* Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the *kingdom of God*
- 1Cor 6:10* nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the *kingdom of God*
- 1Cor 15:50* Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the *kingdom of God*
- Gal 5:21* of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the *kingdom of God*
- Col 4:11* These are my only fellow workers for the *kingdom of God* who are of the circumcision
- 2Th 1:5* which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the *kingdom of God*, for which you also suff<sup>9</sup>

### RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE KINGDOM (Matthew 5:17–48)

The "Sermon on the Mount" is for "sons of the kingdom." What Jesus taught was for His disciples who had "ears to hear" (Matt. 5:1, 2). Therefore, this "sermon" is *not* a set of noble ethics for an ideal religious society. Nor is it a prescription for successful living based on this world's philosophies. Rather, the "Sermon on the Mount" is a description of *God's* standard of righteousness characterizing the citizens of *His* kingdom. And it stands in stark contrast to the self-centered, prideful, unchildlike religious righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, which was artificial, external, legalistic, and burdensome. Let's look how Jesus compared such "righteousness" with the true righteousness of God's kingdom. Write down the six contrasts He gives in Matthew 5:

Matthew 5	RELIGIOUS RIGHTEOUSNESS (keeps the "letter of the Law")	KINGDOM RIGHTEOUSNESS (fulfills the "spirit of the Law")
vv. 21–26		
vv. 27–30		
vv. 31, 32		
vv. 33–37		
vv. 38–42		

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Nelson Publishers. (2000). *Find it Fast in the Bible* (pp. 391–394). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

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vv. 43–48

What does such religious righteousness add up to? What does such kingdom righteousness add up to? Turn to Galatians 5:19–25 and write down the apostle Paul's conclusions (note especially the end of verse 21 and all of verse 22).

<sup>10</sup>

Beyond unveiling the kingdom's dominion over darkness, including its dynamic to heal and deliver, the King also introduces the personal implications of *life* in the kingdom. It calls people:

- to character (5:1–12)
- to credible service and witness (5:13–16)
- to obedience to God's laws (5:17–20)
- to renunciation of anger (5:21–26)
- to physical and mental purity (5:27–30)
- to marital commitment (5:31–32)
- to control of the tongue (5:33–37)
- to a non-retaliatory spirit (5:38–42)
- to a love for all humankind (5:43–48)

Jesus' "Kingdom Manifesto" (the Sermon on the Mount, chs. 5–7) points away from the empty traditions of humanly generated religion (6:1–8, 16–18) and toward vital, faith-filled prayer (6:9–15; 7:7–12).

The kingdom lifestyle is power-filled but not power-hungry.

Unselfish (6:19–24) and non-judgmental living (7:1–6), free from slavery to material concerns (6:25–34), will characterize true kingdom people (7:13–14, 24–29), in contrast to kingdom pretenders (7:15–23). The former walk in obedience, while the latter's claims to prophecy and power are contradicted by a lack of kingdom character.

### **B. Discourse: Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29; see Kingdom of God).**

The Beatitudes (5:1–12). Jesus introduces a new set of values by which His followers are to live. The values run counter to the values found in human societies and cultures. It only makes sense to try to live by these values if we truly believe that God rules in our lives and that He governs our circumstances.

Values expressed in action (5:13–16). Any true value will find some expression in behavior. Jesus is not presenting a morality to which we can give lip service. He is teaching a morality that is to shape our lives!

"To fulfill the Law" (5:17–48). It is the ambition of every rabbi (teacher) to give the true and full interpretation of God's Word, something the first century rabbis call fulfilling it. Jesus promises this revelation!

Jesus now moves on to give illustrations. The Law focuses on behavior (see Judgment). The Law says, "Do not murder," but God's deeper concern is with human motives and intent. Thus anger, which leads to the harming of a brother, is also God's concern!

Each case Jesus cites follows this pattern. Law regulates acts of adultery; God is concerned with lust (27–30). Law permits divorce; God is concerned with lifelong faithfulness (31–32). The Pharisees' traditions demanded binding oaths; God wants a people so honest that their word is their bond (33–37). The Law permits revenge; God seeks a people who will act lovingly (see Brotherly Love) even to those who are enemies (38–48; see Compels).

The kind of lifestyle Jesus describes is impossible for mere men. But those who have a personal relationship with God as Father (48) will find His kingdom power at work within them.

The kingdom misplaced (6:1–7:23). Jesus warns His listeners against pathways that appear to lead to God but that in fact lead a person further and further from personal experience of the kingdom's presence in our lives.

(1) *The path of visible piety* (6:1–18). Jesus warns that outward religion (see Hypocrites) is not the issue. An inner sensitivity to God, and a desire to please Him, is the secret to life in Jesus' present kingdom. The

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<sup>10</sup>Hayford, J. W. 1997, c1993. *Life in the Kingdom : Foundations of the Faith*. Spirit-Filled Life Kingdom Dynamics Study Guides. Thomas Nelson: Nashville

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"Lord's Prayer" guides Jesus' disciples to an understanding of the relationship between \*prayer (see *also* Pray) and the coming of the kingdom with power.

(2) *The pathway of material success (6:19–34)*. In Jesus' day the people believe that wealth is a sign of God's blessing. Jesus warns against focusing on wealth as an evidence of spiritual prosperity. God, a loving Father, meets the daily needs of His children (6:25–31; see *Worry*).

(3) *The pathway of authority over others (7:1–14)*. This warning is for those who see the kingdom of God as an opportunity to exalt themselves over others. (see *Ask*.)

Understanding these pathways helps us to recognize false leaders (7:15–23). They may speak in Jesus' name (21–23), but their character unmasks them.

### **"Therefore by their fruits you will know them"**

(7:16–20). Beware of false prophets: while their outward appearance may suggest propriety, their inward motives can be impure (v. 15). We can discern these imitators on the basis of their fruit—their lifestyle, character, and teaching. False prophets are energized by spirits of error, their bad fruit the work of darkness; true teachers and prophets are energized by the Holy Spirit, their good fruit the product of the Spirit of truth (vv. 17–18). True Spirit-filled leaders will be Christlike in character, and integrity will be the watchword of their ministry. Behavior is as important as belief.

The kingdom discovered (7:24–27). What then is the way to find God's kingdom? We are to look to the King and follow His words. The wise man, whose life is built on solid rock, "hears these words of mine and puts them into practice."

JAMES:

Beginning in the first verse and throughout the letter, James recognizes Jesus' lordship over him, referring to himself as the Lord's "bondservant" or slave. That term applies to all Christians who acknowledge Jesus' sovereignty over their lives and willingly commit themselves to His service. Christ is the object of our faith (2:1), the One in whose name and by whose power we minister (5:14–15). He is the rewarder of those who are steadfast in the midst of trials (1:12) and the Coming One for whom we patiently wait (5:7–9). James identifies Christ as the "glory" (2:1), referring to the Shekinah, the glorious manifestation of God's presence among His people. He is also the divine Glory, the presence of God on earth (see Luke 2:30–32; John 1:14; Heb. 1:3).

**Of considerable interest is the close parallel between the content of this letter and the teachings of Jesus, particularly the Sermon on the Mount.** Although James does not quote any statement of Jesus exactly, there are more reminiscences of the Lord's teachings in this letter than in all the other New Testament epistles combined. These allusions indicate a close association between James and Jesus and a strong influence of the Lord in the author's life.

<sup>11</sup>

Psychiatrist J. T. Fisher put it this way:

If you were to take the total of all authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene—if you were to combine them and refine them and cleave out the excess verbiage—if you were to take the whole of the meat and none of the parsley, and if you were to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount. And it would suffer immeasurably through comparison. For nearly two thousand years the Christian world has been holding in its hands the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearnings.<sup>8</sup>

The wonderful, life-transforming power of the Bible is a fact.

<sup>12</sup>

The Gospels and Epistles contain many passages that use well-known poetical devices or appear in smooth-flowing, highly intense language. All of these characteristics were exemplified in the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus appeared as an Old Testament wisdom teacher. He attacked the prevailing religious abuses, holding

<sup>11</sup>Hayford, J. W. 1995. *Hayford's Bible handbook*. Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville

<sup>12</sup>McDowell, J. 1997, c1991. *Josh McDowell's handbook on apologetics* (electronic ed.). Thomas Nelson: Nashville

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them up for ridicule (i.e., He used *satire*). The opening section of His sermon (the Beatitudes) employed the parallelism so well-known from Old Testament poetry. The entire mood of His presentation ran counter to what is ordinarily found in classical literature. "It is obvious that Jesus is setting up ideals that differ from those espoused in literature."

Several of the verses in the Book of James recall the cadence and literary qualities of the Sermon on the Mount.

**The Sermon on the Mount.** The most famous of all the discourses of Jesus is his Sermon on the Mount. It was delivered to Jesus' disciples and crowds of followers on a mountainside in Galilee. Jesus begins by pronouncing blessings on certain classes of people (the "poor in spirit," the "mourners," the "meek," and others). He then gives his thoughts about the law, teaching the eternal nature of the law and his coming as its fulfillment. The sermon also deals with matters of personal piety, including giving, prayer, judging, and anxiety. The Lord's Prayer is found in the Sermon on the Mount. The message concludes with the two foundations upon which people can build their faith: one compared to sand, which shifts, slides, and is completely unstable; the other compared to rock, which is a firm and stable foundation. Those who build their faith on the "rock" of God's Word need never fear anything. When Jesus concluded his sermon, "the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:28-29).<sup>13</sup>

The Beatitudes of Matthew 5: 3-12 (List character quality and pronouncement of blessing):

Write down the six contrasts Christ gives in Matthew 5:

Matthew 5	RELIGIOUS RIGHTEOUSNESS (keeps the "letter of the Law")	KINGDOM RIGHTEOUSNESS (fulfills the "spirit of the Law")
vv. 21-26		
vv. 27-30		
vv. 31, 32		
vv. 33-37		
vv. 38-42		
vv. 43-48		

What does such religious righteousness add up to?

What does such kingdom righteousness add up to?

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<sup>13</sup>McDowell, J. 1997, c1991. *Josh McDowell's handbook on apologetics* (electronic ed.). Thomas Nelson: Nashville

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**Deuteronomy** 8:3, *Word of God*; 18:18–19, *Messianic Promises*; 28:1, *Prophecy*.  
**Joshua** 1:6–7, 9, *Manhood*; 6:10, *Faith's Confession*; 10:12–14, *Prayer*.  
**Judges** 4:1–5:31, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 4:4–5, *Women*; 6:1–8:35, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 8:22–23; 9:1–57, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 13:6, *Angels*.  
**Ruth** 1:1–4:22, *Women*.  
**2 Samuel** 24:24, *Faith, Seed*.  
**1 Kings** 17:8–16, *Faith, Seed*.  
**2 Kings** 5:1–15, *Healing, Divine*; 6:8–17, *Spiritual Warfare*; 19:8–19, *Spiritual Warfare*; 20:1–11, *Healing, Divine*; 22:3–20, *Women*.  
**1 Chronicles** 29:10–16, *Kingdom of God*.  
**2 Chronicles** 5:13, *Praise*; 6:12–7:1, *Prayer*; 6:24–31, *Faith's Confession*; 20:15–22, *Praise*; 25:9, *Faith, Seed*.  
**Ezra** 8:21–23, *Spiritual Warfare*.  
**Esther** 4:1, *Women*.  
**Job** 40:10–12, *Restoration*; 42:10–13, *Healing, Divine*.  
**Psalms** 2:8, *Evangelism*; 5:1–3, *Spiritual Warfare*; 7:14–17, *Praise*; 8:4–8, *Human Worth*; 15:3, *Brotherly Love*; 16:10, *Messianic Promises*; 18:3, *Praise*; 19:7, *Word of God*; 19:14, *Faith's Confession*; 22:1–31, *Messianic Promises*; 22:3, *Kingdom of God*; 22:3–4, *Praise*; 41:9; 47:7, *Praise*; 50:22–23, *Praise*; 51:1–19, *Prayer*; 63:1–5, *Praise*; 68:5–6, *Family Life*; 71:14, *Praise*; 86:5, *Brotherly Love*; 90:1–17, *Stewardship*; 91:9–10, *Healing, Divine*; 91:11–12, *Angels*; 93:2, *Kingdom of God*; 103:3, *Healing, Divine*; 103:20–21, *Angels*; 107:20, *Healing, Divine*; 119:89–91, *Word of God*; 119:105, *Word of God*; 122:6, *Prophecy*; 126:5–6, *Spiritual Warfare*; 127:3–5, *Family Life*; 145:4, *Praise*; 150:1–6, *Praise*.  
**Proverbs** 3:5–6, *Spiritual Warfare*; 13:24, *Family Life*; 16:23–24, *Faith's Confession*; 24:11–12, *Evangelism*; 30:5–6, *Word of God*.  
**Ecclesiastes** 7:29, *Manhood*.  
**Isaiah** 1:11, *The Blood*; 4:2–3, *Restoration*; 6:2, *Angels*; 6:8–9, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 7:14, *Messianic Promises*; 9:6, *Messianic Promises*; 14:12–14, *Angels*; 28:11–12, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 36:1–37:38, *Prayer*; 40:8–11, *Evangelism*; 53:1–12, *Messianic Promises*; 53:4–5, *Healing, Divine*; 54:5, *Family Life*; 55:10–11, *Word of God*; 58:1–14, *Restoration*; 61:3, *Praise*.  
**Jeremiah** 8:8–9, *Restoration*; 29:11–14, *Spiritual Warfare*; 33:3, *Spiritual Warfare*.  
**Ezekiel** 22:30, *Prayer*; 22:30, *Spiritual Warfare*; 34:1–10, *Restoration*.  
**Daniel** 6:1–5, *Manhood*; 7:21–22, *Kingdom of God*; 10:13, *Angels*.  
**Hosea** 2:16–17, 19–20, *Family Life*; 11:1, 3–4, *Family Life*.  
**Joel** 2:28–29, *Restoration*.  
**Amos** 5:21–23, *Restoration*.  
**Obadiah** 15, *Prophecy*.  
**Micah** 5:2, 4–5, *Messianic Promises*.  
**Haggai** 2:8, *Stewardship*.  
**Zechariah** 9:9; 11:12–13, *Messianic Promises*.  
**Malachi** 2:13–14, 16, *Family Life*; 3:10–11, *Faith, Seed*.

### New Testament

**Matthew** 3:1–2, *Kingdom of God*; 3:1–2; 4:17, *Kingdom of God*; 4:23–25, *Healing, Divine*; 5:1–7:27, *Kingdom of God*; 5:44, *Brotherly Love*; 6:9–13, *Prayer*; 8:16–17, *Healing, Divine*; 11:12, *Kingdom of God*; 11:29, *Manhood*; 13:1–52, *Kingdom of God*; 13:37–38, *Evangelism*; 15:7–9, *Faith's Confession*; 16:13–20, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 17:19–20, *Faith, Seed*; 18:1–4, *Kingdom of God*; 18:18–35, *Kingdom of God*; 19:1–9, *Family Life*; 19:23–24, *Kingdom of God*; 21:16, *Praise*; 24:14, *Evangelism*; 25:13, *Messianic*

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*Promises; 25:34–40, Faith, Seed; 25:37–40, Human .Worth; 26:28, The Blood; 26:47–54, Leadership, Spiritual; 27:32, Human .Worth; 28:18–20, Evangelism.*

**Mark** 1:14–15, *Kingdom of God*; 1:15, *Kingdom of God*; 1:40–45, *Healing, Divine*; 4:1–20, *Faith, Seed*; 5:24–34, *Healing, Divine*; 9:22–23, *Healing, Divine*; 11:20–24, *Spiritual Warfare*; 11:22–24, *Faith, Seed*; 11:22–24, *Faith's Confession*; 16:15–18, *Evangelism*.

**Luke** 1:26–56, *Women*; 2:36–38, *Women*; 3:1–20, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 4:14–32, *Kingdom of God*; 5:1–11, *Faith, Seed*; 5:16–26, *Healing, Divine*; 6:31–35, *Brotherly Love*; 6:38, *Faith, Seed*; 8:2, *Women*; 8:36, *Healing, Divine*; 9:1–2, *Kingdom of God*; 10:8–9, *Healing, Divine*; 10:33, *Human .Worth*; 10:38–42, *Women*; 11:2–4, *Kingdom of God*; 11:20, *Kingdom of God*; 16:22, *Angels*; 16:16, *Kingdom of God*; 16:17, *Word of God*; 17:12–19, *Healing, Divine*; 17:20–21, *Kingdom of God*; 24:45–48, *Evangelism*.

**John** 3:1–5, *Kingdom of God*; 3:16, *Faith, Seed*; 4:34, *Prayer*; 6:53–54, *The Blood*; 8:58, *Healing, Divine*; 10:10, *Faith, Seed*; 10:10, *Human .Worth*; 10:10, *Restoration*; 12:26, *Brotherly Love*; 13:1–17, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 13:34–35, *Human .Worth*; 13:34–35, *Restoration*; 14:1–3, *Messianic Promises*; 14:16–17, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 14:21, *Word of God*; 15:12–13, *Brotherly Love*; 18:36, *Kingdom of God*; 20:21–23, *Evangelism*.

**Acts** 1:3–8, *Kingdom of God*; 1:8, *Evangelism*; 1:10–11, *Messianic Promises*; 1:14, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 2:4, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 2:22, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 2:45, *Manhood*; 3:6, *Faith's Confession*; 3:16, *Healing, Divine*; 3:19–21, *Restoration*; 4:1–37, *Prayer*; 4:12, *Evangelism*; 4:31–34, *Spiritual Warfare*; 4:32–35, *Stewardship*; 4:33, *Faith's Confession*; 6:1–4, *Spiritual Warfare*; 8:26, *Angels*; 10:46, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 11:27–30, *Prophecy*; 12:1–17, *Prayer*; 13:1–3, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 13:1–14:28, *Prayer*; 13:22, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 14:21–22, *Kingdom of God*; 15:16–18, *Restoration*; 16:6–10, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 16:25–26, *Praise*; 17:26, *Human .Worth*; 19:2, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 21:9, *Women*; 21:11, *Prophecy*; 26:19, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 28:8–9, *Healing, Divine*.

**Romans** 1:18–32, *Stewardship*; 3:23, *Evangelism*; 3:25, *The Blood*; 5:9, *The Blood*; 8:2, 9, 15, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 10:9–10, *Faith's Confession*; 10:13–15, *Evangelism*; 11:19–24, *Prophecy*; 12:1, *Stewardship*; 12:3–5, *Human .Worth*; 12:6–8, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 13:1, *Manhood*; 15:5–7, *Family Life*; 16:1, *Women*.

**1 Corinthians** 3:1–5, *Word of God*; 6:9–10, *Kingdom of God*; 6:13–20, *Stewardship*; 7:3–4, *Family Life*; 10:16, *The Blood*; 11:3, *Family Life*; 11:3, *Manhood*; 11:23–26, *Faith's Confession*; 12:12, *Human .Worth*; 12:8–10, 28, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 12:9, 28, *Healing, Divine*; 12:28, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 13:1, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 14:1, *Prophecy*; 14:1–40, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 14:27, *Holy Spirit Gifts*.

**2 Corinthians** 3:5–8, *Word of God*; 9:8–10, *Faith, Seed*; 10:15–16, *Evangelism*.

**Galatians** 5:22, *Manhood*; 5:22–23, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 6:7–8, *Evangelism*; 6:7–9, *Faith, Seed*.

**Ephesians** 1:17–19, *Prophecy*; 2:13, *The Blood*; 3:14–15, *Family Life*; 3:14–21, *Prayer*; 4:11, *Holy Spirit Gifts*; 4:32, *Manhood*; 5:15–16, *Stewardship*; 5:18–19, *Praise*; 5:22–23, *Family Life*; 5:25, *Manhood*; 6:4, *Family Life*; 6:10–18, *Spiritual Warfare*.

**Philippians** 2:5–8, *Manhood*; 2:9–11, *Faith's Confession*.

**Colossians** 1:13, *Kingdom of God*; 1:16, *Angels*; 1:20, *The Blood*; 1:27–28, *Kingdom of God*; 2:13–15, *Kingdom of God*; 3:18–19, 23–24, *Family Life*.

**1 Thessalonians** 4:15–18, *Messianic Promises*.

**1 Timothy** 3:1–13, *Leadership, Spiritual*.

**2 Timothy** 2:15, *Word of God*; 2:22, *Stewardship*; 3:16, *Word of God*.

**Hebrews** 1:14, *Angels*; 2:11–12, *Praise*; 4:11–13, *Faith's Confession*; 9:12, *The Blood*; 11:8, *Manhood*; 11:13–16, *Faith's Confession*; 12:26–27, *Restoration*; 13:10–15, *Praise*.

**James** 1:4, *Manhood*; 1:23–25, *Word of God*; 2:1–9, *Human .Worth*; 3:1, *Leadership, Spiritual*; 5:13–18, *Healing, Divine*; 5:13–18, *Spiritual Warfare*; 5:15–16, *Faith, Seed*.

**1 Peter** 1:18–19, *The Blood*; 1:18–19, *Human .Worth*; 1:23, *Word of God*; 2:9, *Kingdom of God*; 2:9, *Praise*; 3:1, *Women*; 3:1–7, *Family Life*.

**2 Peter** 1:7–8, *Brotherly Love*; 1:16–19, *Prophecy*.

**1 John** 2:18, *Prophecy*; 4:1–6, *Prophecy*; 5:14–15, *Prayer*.

**Jude** 9, *Angels*; 20, *Holy Spirit Gifts*.

**Revelation** 1:1, *Angels*; 1:5–6, *Kingdom of God*; 4:1, *Prophecy*; 5:8–10, *Evangelism*; 12:7, 9, *Angels*; 12:7–11, *Spiritual Warfare*; 12:10–11, *Kingdom of God*; 12:11, *The Blood*; 12:11, *Faith's Confession*; 19:7–9, *Restoration*; 19:10, *Prophecy*; 22:20, *Messianic Promises*.

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

Hayford, J. W. 1995. *Hayford's Bible handbook*. Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville

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**KINGDOM OF GOD, KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**—God's rule of grace in the world, a future period foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament and identified and ministered by Jesus as beginning with His public ministry and continuing today through His ministry in the church, until that Day it is consummated with His Coming and rule on earth. The kingdom of God is the experience of blessedness, like that of the Garden of Eden, where evil is fully overcome and where those who live in the kingdom know only happiness, peace, and joy. This was the main expectation of the Old Testament prophets about the future.

John the Baptist astonished his hearers when he announced that this expected and hoped-for kingdom was "at hand" in the person of Jesus (Matt. 3:2). Jesus repeated this message (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15), but He went even further by announcing clearly that the kingdom was already present in His ministry: "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). Jesus was the full embodiment of the kingdom.

The entire ministry of Jesus is understood in relation to this important declaration of the presence of the kingdom. His ethical teachings, for example, cannot be understood apart from the announcement of the kingdom. They are ethics of the kingdom; the perfection to which they point makes no sense apart from the present experience of the kingdom. Participation in the new reality of the kingdom involves a follower of Jesus in a call to the highest righteousness (Matt. 5:20).

The acts and deeds of Jesus likewise make sense only in the larger context of proclaiming the kingdom. When John the Baptist asked whether Jesus was "the Coming One," or the Messiah, Jesus answered by recounting some of His deeds of healing (Matt. 11:5). The reference in these words to the expectation of a \*messiah, especially of the prophet Isaiah (Is. 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1), could not have been missed by John. At the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read a passage from Isaiah 61 about the coming messianic age and then made the astonishing announcement, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

All that Jesus did is related to this claim that the kingdom of God has dawned through His ministry. His healings were manifestations of the presence of the kingdom. In these deeds there was a direct confrontation between God and the forces of evil, or Satan and his demons. Summarizing His ministry, Jesus declared, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Satan and evil are in retreat now that the kingdom has made its entrance into human history. This is progressing now (1 John 2:17), and we live in anticipation of the final age of perfection that will be realized at Christ's return.

Although the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John focus on the present aspect of the kingdom of God, it is also clear that the kingdom will be realized perfectly only at the \*Second Coming. The kingdom that comes through the ministry of Jesus dawns in the form of a mystery. Although it is physically present in the deeds and words of Jesus, it does not overwhelm the world. The judgment of God's enemies is postponed. The kingdom that arrived with Jesus did not include the triumphal victory so longed for by the Jews. It arrived secretly like leaven, inconspicuously like a mustard seed, or like a small pearl of great value that can be hidden in one's pocket (Matt. 13:31-46).

The demons reflect this oddity when they ask Jesus, "Have you come here to torment us before the time?" (Matt. 8:29). The future kingdom will bring the present age to an end and usher in the perfect age promised in the prophets. The present kingdom is both an anticipation and a guarantee of this future bliss.

The expression kingdom of God occurs mostly in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The Gospel of John and the epistles of the New Testament refer to the same reality but in different language, using phrases such as eternal life or salvation. The apostle Paul identified the kingdom of God as "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). Perhaps one reason he described it this way is that the kingdom of God was a Jewish expression unfamiliar and possibly misleading to Gentiles.

Some interpreters of the Bible have described the phrase kingdom of God as a more comprehensive term referring to both heaven and earth. Likewise, some believe kingdom of God is a more restricted term referring to God's rule on earth, especially in relation to the nation of Israel. In this view Jesus offered the literal kingdom of heaven to Israel, but the Jews refused to accept it. Thus, it has been postponed until the Second Coming of Christ.

A careful study of the Gospels, however, shows that the two phrases are used interchangeably. In parallel passages, Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven" while Mark and Luke has "kingdom of God" (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:28). Even in Matthew the two phrases are sometimes used interchangeably, as in Matthew 19:23-24, where they are used one after the other in the same connection.

Hayford, J. W. 1995. *Hayford's Bible handbook*. Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville

### Parables of Jesus Parable

Matthew

Mark

Luke

<sup>14</sup>Hayford, J. W. 1995. *Hayford's Bible handbook*. Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville

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Lamp Under a Bowl	Matt 5:15–16	Mark 4:21–22	Luke 8:16–17; 11:33–36
Wise and Foolish Builders	Matt 7:24–27	—	Luke 6:47–49
Unshrunk Cloth on an Old Garment	Matt 9:16	Mark 2:21	Luke 5:36
New Wine in Old Wineskins	Matt 9:17	Mark 2:22	Luke 5:37–38
The Sower and the Soils	Matt 13:3–9	Mark 4:3–9	Luke 8:5–8
The Weeds and the Wheat*	Matt 13:24–30	—	—
The Mustard Seed*	Matt 13:31–32	Mark 4:30–32	Luke 13:18–19
The Yeast*	Matt 13:33	—	Luke 13:20–21
The Hidden Treasure*	Matt 13:44	—	—
The Valuable Pearl*	Matt 13:45–46	—	—
The Net*	Matt 13:47–50	—	—
The Owner of a House	Matt 13:52	—	—
The Lost Sheep	Matt 18:12–14	—	Luke 15:4–7
The Unforgiving Servant*	Matt 18:23–35	—	—
The Workers in the Vineyard*	Matt 20:1–16	—	—
The Two Sons	Matt 21:28–32	—	—
The Tenant Farmers in the Vineyard	Matt 21:33–45	Mark 12:1–12	Luke 20:9–19
The Wedding Celebration*	Matt 22:2–14	—	—
The Fig Tree	Matt 24:32–34	Mark 13:28–29	Luke 21:29–31
The Faithful Slave and the Unfaithful Slave	Matt 24:45–51	—	Luke 12:42–48
The Ten Virgins*	Matt 25:1–13	—	—
The Talents/Minas	Matt 25:14–30	—	Luke 19:12–27
The Seed that Grows by Itself*	—	Mark 4:26–29	—
The Absent Homeowner	—	Mark 13:34–37	—
The Two Debtors	—	—	Luke 7:41–43
The Good Samaritan	—	—	Luke 10:30–37
The Friend Who Asks	—	—	Luke 11:5–13
The Rich Fool	—	—	Luke 12:16–21

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The Watchful Servants	—	—	Luke 12:35–40
The Barren Fig Tree	—	—	Luke 13:6–9
The Great Banquet	—	—	Luke 14:16–24
Counting the Cost	—	—	Luke 14:28–33
The Lost Coin	—	—	Luke 15:8–10
The Lost Son	—	—	Luke 15:11–32
The Dishonest Manager	—	—	Luke 16:1–13
The Rich Man and Lazarus	—	—	Luke 16:19–31
Unworthy Slaves	—	—	Luke 17:7–10
The Unjust Judge	—	—	Luke 18:1–8
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector	—	—	Luke 18:9–14

\* Denotes a parable which Jesus introduces by saying, “The kingdom of heaven/God is like ...”<sup>15</sup>

**Sermon on the Mount.** Of the five discourses of Jesus in Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5–7) is the first, the longest, and the most prominent. Following Matthew’s introduction to the person of Jesus (1:1–4:25), the sermon comprises the first words of Jesus to confront the reader and because of the arrangement of the canon, it holds the place of honor in the New Testament. Since the postapostolic age it has attracted more attention than any other section of the Bible and was considered the quintessential expression of Jesus’ teachings. The study of its interpretations is the history of the development of theology. Luke’s parallel, the Sermon on the Plain (6:17–49), with its 33 verses compared to Matthew’s 107 or 109, does not match its detail, organization, complexity of interpretation, and unequivocal demands. Luke locates many parallels to Matthew’s Sermon in other episodes of Jesus’ life and not his Sermon on the Plain. Where Matthew’s Sermon has the Lord’s Prayer as part of a general instruction given by Jesus to the disciples (6:9), Luke has the disciples asking Jesus to follow the example of John the Baptist who taught his disciples to pray (11:1). Mark has no similar discourse and his parallels are few (4:21, 24–25; 9:43–48; 11:25).

**Matthew and His Sermon on the Mount.** Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount must be interpreted within the totality of his Gospel and not as an isolated discourse. His penchant for order is evident in the division of the genealogy into three parts each with fourteen persons (1:2–17), the five discourses, and the division of the Gospel into two parts (4:17; 16:21); this indicates that he is arranging and editing preexisting material spoken by Jesus on more than one occasion, a suggestion put forth by Calvin and supported recently by Joachim Jeremias. Such divisions concluding with repetitions (e.g., “when Jesus had finished” [7:28; 11:1]), aided the reader’s memory. Matthew is more the editor of sayings collected in the Sermon on the Mount than he is their author.

The dating of the Gospel affects the sermon’s interpretation and its place of origin. A date after 70 A.D. means that the evangelist was not an eyewitness but dependent on oral tradition. Indications within the sermon challenge this. Laying gifts before the altar (5:23–24) and swearing by Jerusalem (5:35) reflect a time when Christians were still involved in Jewish cultic life (cf. Acts 3:1). Recent attempts to place the composition of the Sermon on the Mount after 85 to correspond with the Council of Jamnia are unconvincing, as the temple’s destruction made its rituals inoperative. Disparaging remarks about Gentiles praying empty phrases (6:7) would hardly fit a situation where they had become the majority (cf. Acts 15:1–29). The world reflected in the Sermon on the Mount was that of Jerusalem in the first half of the first century. Matthew’s retention of such severely cruel

<sup>15</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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commands as plucking out one's eye and cutting off one's hand (5:28–29) can only be adequately explained if they originated with Jesus. Such common oriental paradoxical exaggeration, rarely taken literally even by absolutist interpretations, requiring total commitment to the kingdom might escape or offend converts from a non-Jewish background. It is more likely that Luke passed over these sayings than that a later writer like Matthew added them. The sermon most likely was transmitted first orally, as were rabbinic teachings, with repetition devices to aid memory. This oral transmission developed into a fixed body of tradition that Matthew, apart from what he knew directly and remembered, also had at his disposal. References in the list of the apostles to Matthew as a tax collector (10:3), missing in the synoptic parallels (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15), suggest that the author had heard Jesus. As Jesus with his "but I tell you" (5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44) puts himself in the place of God and makes his words the standard for the judgment (7:24–27), it is possible these sayings were gathered into written collections before being placed into Matthew's Gospel. Behind Matthew's Sermon on the Mount is probably one delivered near Capernaum. References to the temple could reflect discourses given in Judea (5:24; 6:34).

***The Place of the Sermon within Matthew's Gospel.*** Matthew's fivefold division for the sayings of Jesus suggests that the Sermon on the Mount should be interpreted within the totality of the Gospel. All five discourses are directed to the disciples and end with Matthew's characteristic "and when Jesus had finished" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1), with the last bringing them together with "all these things" (26:1). These further are assumed into 28:20 with Jesus' command to his disciples to teach the Gentiles everything he commanded. Items raised in the sermon appear elsewhere, specifically in Matthew's four other discourses: the apostles and their authority (chap. 10); the kingdom explained in parables (chap. 13); humility as a mark of the community (18:1–19:1); and the end-times (chaps. 24–25).

The Beatitudes with their initiatory "blessed" (5:3–11) prepare for this title given first to the apostles as those who have heard and understood the parables (13:16) and then to Peter who confesses Jesus as Christ (16:17). The sermon's parable of the two houses (7:24–27), a brief apocalypse in its own right, sets the literary tone for the second discourse with its parables (chap. 13), the last of which deals also with the judgment (13:47–50) and anticipates "the little apocalypse" (25:31–46). With the words of Jesus as the basis for the final judgment, the Sermon on the Mount looks ahead to the Gospel's conclusion, which obligates the disciples to teach its words (28:20). The transfiguration with God's command to listen to Jesus (17:5) makes his words superior to those of Moses and Elijah and thus in him the law and the prophets reach their conclusion (5:28). Disciples who are only partially named at the sermon's beginning (4:18, 20; 5:1) are all named in 10:2–4 and appear at the end of the Gospel as the guardians of Jesus' words. Persecution promised in 5:11–12 is spelled out in 10:17–18 and is actualized in Jesus' own suffering (chaps. 26–27). The demand for unalloyed faith (6:25–33, esp. v. 30) is explicated in the discourse on the humility and faith of children (18:1–5). The necessity of forgiveness (18:15–35) is presupposed in loving the enemy (5:38–48). The sermon is a self-contained unit introducing the remainder of Matthew where its themes are further developed.

***The Sermon's Speaker, Order, and Message.*** The sermon introduces Jesus sitting on the mountain (5:1–2), reminding the reader of Moses' giving of the law at Sinai. Jesus opens up his mouth (5:2), assuming the law and prophets into his words and mission (5:17).

The Beatitudes, as the sermon's first words, come not with threats, but describe the new community in christological terms to identify believers with Jesus (5:3–11). They are God's law fulfilled in Jesus and applied to Christians. The community in Christ described in the Beatitudes is a continuation of Israel in which the prophetic word is not annulled but fulfilled and remains in force in him and not as separate legislation (5:17–20). Jesus' coming transformed the Old Testament. Each beatitude describes the new community in Jesus from a different perspective: the poor in spirit, the merciful, the peacemakers, those persecuted for his sake and those persecuted because of righteousness. The Beatitudes anticipate specific behavioral standards for the community (5:21–46). Reconciliation with the estranged brother is required (5:21–26); adultery even of the heart brings condemnation (5:27–30); divorce carries severe consequences (5:31–32); oaths about future undertakings are disallowed (5:33–37); retaliation for alleged wrongs is renounced (5:38–42); and love is extended to one's enemies (5:43–48). Directives for the worshiping community are set down (6:1–18): giving to the needy is to be done in secret (6:1–4); rubrics on prayer include reciting the Lord's Prayer and avoiding long repetitions (6:5–15); and fasting remains part of Christian piety, but must be unannounced (6:16–18). Then follow general directives (6:19–7:12): treasures are to be laid up in heaven (6:19–21); the eye as the body's organ of light must remain uncontaminated (6:22–23); anxiety, the enemy of faith, must be avoided (6:25–34); condemnation of the brother is forbidden (7:1–5); faith believes God answers prayers (7:7–11); and the "Golden Rule" requires the same behavior one desires from others (7:12). The sermon closes with warnings. Those not following the "way," set forth in the sermon, are destined for

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damnation (7:13–14). False teachers will deceive believers (7:15–20). The parable of the houses describes the final judgment (7:24–27). At the end of the sermon the superior authority of Jesus is recognized by the crowds (7:28–8:1), and later confirmed by the resurrection (28:18). Although the sermon has the form of directives, its central message is that the community of Jesus is reconciled with those within and without. Thus, like God, it renounces retribution (5:43–48).

**The Sermon's Audience.** The Sermon on the Mount is best understood as instruction (*didachē* [7:28; 28:20]) for believers. Matthew's discourses are intended for the community of baptized believers and individuals as members of this community. Even when the believer prays alone (6:6), he does so as a member of the community in saying "Our Father" (6:9). Reconciliation is important for the sake of the community. The Sermon on the Mount defines the church and then describes how it appears in Christ.

Matthew's Sermon on the Mount continues to inform and shape the church's life. It joins believers with Christ and gives unity to his teachings. Its Beatitudes (5:3–11), Lord's Prayer (6:9–13), and Golden Rule (7:12), along with other sections belong to common Christian piety. Differing interpretations have not robbed the Sermon on the Mount of its continued influence.

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**Bibliography.** W. D. Davies, *The Setting on the Sermon on the Mount*; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*; idem, *SJT* 44: 283–309; H. McArthur, *Understanding the Sermon on the Mount*; R. A. Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*; J. Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount*; W. S. Kissinger, *The Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography*; I. A. Massey, *Interpreting the Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Jewish Tradition as Evidenced in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch*.<sup>16</sup>

**SERMON ON THE MOUNT/PLAIN** The first of five speeches delivered by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. Recorded in Matt 5:3–7:27. Provides a condensed description of how a citizen of the kingdom of God should live. Has parallels with the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6:20–49.

### Source and Setting

Hagner notes that the parallel material in the book of Luke's "Sermon on the Plain" does not occur in one section, but is scattered throughout the Gospel. This suggests that the "sermon" is a compilation of Jesus' sayings by the evangelist, rather than something spoken by Jesus on a single occasion" (Hagner, *Matthew*, 83). France also sees it as a collection of Jesus' teachings that does not represent a single sermon (France, *Matthew*, 111).

Morris contends that the appearance of similar material throughout Luke does not necessarily mean that it "is Matthew's sermon rather than that of Jesus" (Morris, *Matthew*, 92). While the Sermon on the Mount contains portions of Jesus' teaching on other occasions, "an itinerant preacher normally makes repeated use of his material, often with minor or even major changes.... That we find somewhat similar statements in other parts of the Gospels does not mean that Jesus did not use them on this occasion" (Morris, *Matthew*, 92). Blomberg understands the sermon as an abridgement of an actual sermon delivered on one occasion—"ancient writing excerpted and epitomized longer materials, and a detailed study of Jesus' final discourse in Matthew (chaps. 24–25) suggests that this is precisely the approach the Gospel writers have adopted" (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 96).

The Sermon on the Mount may have existed in its current form before its appearance in Matthew. Betz writes, "The composer and author of the Sermon had taken sayings of Jesus and arranged them in such a way that the whole amounted to a kind of manual for the instruction of disciples" (Betz, "Hypothesis," 75). According to Betz, the sermon is an attempt at "presenting the theology of Jesus in a systematic fashion ... designed out of sayings of Jesus grouped according to thematic points of doctrine considered to be of primary importance" (Betz, *Essays*, 15). It "represents a theology of Jewish Christianity that can be located, perhaps, in Jerusalem around AD 50" (Betz, "Hypothesis," 78). The content of the Sermon on the Mount stands independent from the rest of Matthew—it was inserted by the apostle when composing the Gospel. Snodgrass disagrees with Betz's assessment—"So many similarities exist between the Sermon and the rest of Matthew that such a case is difficult to make.... Matthew is in some ways a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount" (Snodgrass, "Response," 89).

Matthew and Luke may have been using a common source, "Q," and arranging it to suit their theological aims (Davies, *Setting*, 20–25). The following chart shows the overlap between accounts in Matthew and Luke (Hagner, *Matthew*, 83):

Matt 5:1–12, 38–48; 7:1–5, 12, 16–21, 24–27

Luke 6:17–49

Matt 5:13

Luke 14:34–35

Matt 5:14

Luke 11:33

<sup>16</sup> Scaer, D. P. (1996). [Sermon on the Mount](#). In *Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology* (electronic ed., pp. 723–725). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

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Matt 5:18	Luke 16:17
Matt 5:25–26	Luke 12:57–59
Matt 5:31–32	Luke 16:18
Matt 6:9–13	Luke 11:2–4
Matt 6:19–21	Luke 12:33–34
Matt 6:21–23	Luke 11:34–36
Matt 6:24	Luke 16:13
Matt 6:25–34	Luke 12:22–32
Matt 7:7–11	Luke 11:9–13
Matt 7:13–14	Luke 13:23–24
Matt 7:22–23	Luke 13:25–27

Though these parallels have led some to believe that the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain are the same discourse, Morris contends that “the differences ... are such that it is not easy to regard them as variant accounts of the same sermon. It is better to think that Jesus used similar material on more than one occasion” (Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 93).

Jesus directs the Sermon on the Mount primarily to His disciples, although the crowds heard his preaching as well (Matt 5:1; 7:28). While the ethics taught in the sermon apply specifically to those already following Jesus, the crowds “learn what genuine discipleship involves as they consider the possibility of commitment to Jesus” (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 97). Baxter notes that Matt 1–10 is thematically tied to the Sermon on the Mount (Baxter, “Sermon on the Mount,” 28–30).

While it’s known that Jesus was near the Sea of Galilee, precisely where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount and/or the Sermon on the Plain is unknown.

### Structure

Several structures of the Sermon on the Mount have been proposed, and several evident features of the sermon exist (Nolland, *Matthew*, 196):

- (Matt 5:3–12)—An opening set of beatitudes
- (Matt 5:21–43)—A series of six antitheses—anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, enemies
- (Matt 6:1–18)—Three fundamental areas of piety—almsgiving, prayer, and fasting

Allison observes the following structure of the Sermon on the Mount (Allison, “The Sermon on the Mount,” 429):

- (Matt 4:23–5:2)—Introduction
- (Matt 5:3–7:27)—Discourse
- (Matt 7:28–8:1)—Conclusion

The beginning and ending sections share multiple words and phrases. The verses immediately surrounding the body correlate, as “ ‘opening his mouth’ does for its counterpart ‘when Jesus finished these words’ (Matt 5:2; 7:28)” (Allison, “The Sermon on the Mount,” 429). Allison organizes the body of the sermon as follows (Allison, “The Sermon on the Mount,” 431–32):

- (Matt 5:3–12)—Nine blessings
- (Matt 5:13–7:12)—Core of the sermon
  - (Matt 5:13–16)—Summary: salt and light
  - (Matt 5:17–7:12)—The three pillars
    - (Matt 5:17–48)—Jesus and the Torah
    - (Matt 6:1–18)—The Christian cult
    - (Matt 6:19–7:12)—Social issues
- (Matt 7:13–27)—Three warnings

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Allison then subdivides the sermon into triads, underscoring its careful structure (Allison, 438–40). Osborne titles the three main parts (Osborne, *Matthew*, 161)—as follows:

- (Matt 5:17–48)—“The relationship of the law to the new covenant in Jesus”
- (Matt 6:1–18)—“True versus false piety”
- (Matt 6:19–7:12)—“Social ethics”

Hagner suggests a similar structure (Hagner, *Matthew*, 84):

- (Matt 5:17–48)—The relation between the old and the new righteousness
- (Matt 6:1–18)—Outward vs. inward righteousness
- (Matt 6:19–34)—Dependence upon God
- (Matt 7:1–12)—Various teachings and the Golden Rule

Alternative suggestions for the structure organize the sermon around a central portion:

- Blomberg considers Christ's statement on the law a “thesis statement” of the sermon (Blomberg, “Abused Verses,” 6).
- Osborne suggests the center may be the Lord's Prayer, but he concludes, “likely there is no center” (Matt 6:9–13; Osborne, *Matthew*, 161).
- Draper proposes a “concentric” structure that “hinges on the theme of ‘righteousness’ understood as correct interpretation of the Torah according to the teaching of Jesus” (Draper, “Genesis and Narrative Thrust,” 32). He considers Matt 6:33 the center of the sermon (Draper, “Genesis and Narrative Thrust,” 33–34):
- A (Matt 5:1–2)—Introduction
- B (Matt 5:3–10)—Eight blessings for doing righteousness
- C (Matt 5:11–16)—Disciples warned to do good works
- D (Matt 5:17–48)—Greater righteousness needed to enter the kingdom
- E (Matt 6:1–2)—Righteousness not to be done for human judgment
- F (Matt 6:22–34)—Seek righteousness and his kingdom first
- E' (Matt 7:1–5)—Do not judge others
- D' (Matt 7:6–14)—Rules of entry and exclusion
- C' (Matt 7:15–23)—False prophets known by not doing good works
- B' (Matt 7:24–27)—Blessings and curses for doing/not doing Jesus' words
- A' (Matt 7:28–29)—Conclusion

Blomberg considers Draper's structure “intriguing” but “ultimately less persuasive” than Allison's (Blomberg, “Abused Verses,” 4).

### Approaches to Interpretation

Osborne summarizes approaches to interpreting the Sermon on the Mount as (Osborne, *Matthew*, 159; see also Carson, *Sermon on the Mount*, 151–57):

1. A medieval approach—two levels of ethics with a higher set of standards for clergy and monastic members.
2. Luther's approach—the sermon discloses our depravity and brings us to repentance.
3. An Anabaptist approach—the sermon is a call to pacifism.
4. A liberal approach—the sermon is a paradigm for the social gospel.
5. An existentialist approach—the sermon is not absolute, but a challenge to personal decision.
6. Schweitzer's approach—the sermon is an “interim ethic” leading to a temporary set of codes to follow.
7. The dispensational approach—the sermon is limited in scope to the “future millennial kingdom” and applies only to the Jews, not to the church.
8. The “inaugurated eschatology” approach—believers should attempt to follow the commands, but full observance will only happen after Christ returns.
9. A wisdom teaching approach—Jesus was expressing His convictions using wisdom forms.

He concludes that a combination of the last two options is probably the best approach to the Sermon on the Mount (Osborne, *Matthew*, 160). Blomberg suggests taking the “inaugurated eschatology” approach, which “recognizes an ‘already/not yet’ tension in which the sermon's ethic remains the ideal or goal for all Christians in every age but which will never be fully realized until the consummation of the kingdom at Christ's return” (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 95). In this approach, the sermon teaches God's community how to live in the midst of a broken world that God is in the process of redeeming.

### Theology

The Sermon on the Mount is a call for the church to live according to the values of the kingdom of God. As citizens of the kingdom, disciples live under the rule of God, not society. Bailey considers the Sermon on the Mount “a model for a ‘contrast

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community' in today's world" (Bailey, "Model for Community," 86). Drawing from the Beatitudes, Bailey suggests that such a community:

1. Participates in restoring the broken world to its natural order in Christ
2. Is dependent on God and aware of its spiritual poverty without Christ
3. Pursues righteousness as "God's way of 'setting all things right in relationships' " (Bailey, "Sermon on the Mount," 88)
4. Endures suffering for the sake of what is right

The Sermon on the Mount provides teachings that help the Church to live according to Jesus' commands. He urges the Church:

- (Matt 5:13–16) To be salt and light
- (Matt 5:21–25) To forgive and reconcile quickly
- (Matt 6:9–13) To pray unselfishly for the kingdom

He also provides examples of this kingdom-centered life. Bailey summarizes, "The very existence of a contrast community is a witness to the surrounding culture and becomes attractive to many outsiders who are searching for a place of acceptance and hopefulness" (Bailey, "Model for Community," 93).

Stott states that the sermon "is the most complete delineation anywhere in the New Testament of the Christian counterculture. Here is a Christian value-system, ethical standard, religious devotion, attitude to money, ambition, lifestyle and network of relationships—all of which are totally at variance with those of the non-Christian world" (Stott, *Sermon on the Mount*, 19). Jesus' ethical teachings encourage the church to live in such a way that He attracts people to Himself. Such living is "in conscious distinction from the norms of the rest of society" (France, *Matthew*, 153).

The Sermon on the Mount is a call to radical discipleship. Jesus instructs the disciples, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48 ESV). Jesus' manner of teaching "cannot simply be converted into a set of rules and regulations" (France, *Matthew*, 154), but must be understood in light of a relationship with Him. His lofty call to be "perfect" (τὸ ἔλεος, *teleioi*) can only be realized in a saving relationship with Christ (Matt 5:48). In accordance with the "inaugurated eschatology" approach, such perfection will only be fully experienced after Jesus returns (Hagner, *Matthew*, 83). Until that time, disciples are to pursue this radical life of love and obedience in every sphere of life.

The Sermon on the Mount puts mission at the heart of the disciples' lives. The salt and light metaphor in Matt 5:13–16 directs the disciples to transform the world. Blomberg likens the sermon to a "manifesto by which the new community Jesus is forming should live." He writes that "the church must try to permeate society with these ideals" (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 95).

The Sermon on the Mount communicates the radical love and grace of God. Davies and Allison point to the setting in which the sermon is delivered—"The Sermon on the Mount sets forth God's grace in the past (Matt 4:23–5:2), in the present (Matt 6:25–34; 7:7–11), and in the future (Matt 5:3–12); and this is the context in which [Matt] 5:13–7:12 is to be heard" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 441). Jesus communicates an impossibly high standard—Morris remarks, "If we take it seriously we realize that we cannot attain it and therefore cannot merit salvation ... if it stretches our horizons in this way, it also enables us to understand more of what the grace of God means" (Morris, *Matthew*, 91–2).

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# The Three Kingdoms

## Christ's Kingdom

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### **SERMON ON THE MOUNT/PLAIN, COMPARISON** Reviews scholarship on the relationship between the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:3–7:27) and the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20–49).

The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain differ because of the authors' audiences and theological purposes (Lenski, *The Interpretation*). The Sermon on the Mount is composed of 110 verses; the Sermon on the Plain is 30. Approximately 27 percent of the Sermon on the Mount finds parallels in the Sermon on the Plain. A further 33 percent has parallels elsewhere in Luke (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 154–155; McNeile, *The Gospel*, 99). Specific differences between the two sermons include:

- Matthew speaks of the "poor in spirit" (Matt 5:3), and Luke speaks of the "poor" (Luke 6:20).
- Matthew speaks of hungering and thirsting for righteousness (Matt 5:6), whereas Luke speaks of the hungry (Luke 6:21).
- Matthew states eight blessings (Matt 5:3–12) and Luke gives four blessings and four woes (Luke 6:20–26).

### **Audience and Context**

Matthew wrote for Jewish Christians, presenting Jesus as the messianic king of the line of David. Luke wrote for Gentile Christians, presenting Jesus as the Savior of the outcasts and disenfranchised, the Servant foretold by Isaiah, who comforts the oppressed.

Matthew's Gospel sets the Sermon on the Mount in the context of Jesus' growing popularity, as more and more people follow Him. Matthew 4:17 records that Jesus began His preaching ministry in Galilee, declaring, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 5 shifts from Jesus' preaching to His teaching.

Luke's Gospel similarly sets the Sermon on the Plain in the context of Jesus' traveling and teaching ministry. Bock notes that Jesus' teaching in Luke 4:16–27 is a declaration of the year of Jubilee, as He reads from Isaiah 61, which speaks of the restoration of possession and status (Bock, *Luke*, 406, 410). In the chapter following the Sermon on the Plain, John the Baptizer's disciples ask whether Jesus is truly the expected Messiah, and Jesus tells them to report that, "The blind receive sight ... the poor have the good news preached to them" (Luke 7:18–23). In this way, the Sermon on the Plain is sandwiched by statements of restoration that reflect the Year of Jubilee. In earlier chapters, Luke traces Jesus' lineage back to Adam (Luke 3:23–38), indicating that the Gentiles are included in the restoration of the relationship they had lost as sons of God (Luke 3:38). Bock points out that the Sermon on the Plain also appears in the context of rising division about Jesus (Luke 5:17–6:11) and increasing opposition from the religious establishment (Bock, *Luke*, 568).

### **The Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God**

Whereas the other Synoptic writers prefer the phrase "kingdom of God," Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven" 32 times. This phrase does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament. The phrase "kingdom of God" appears in Matthew's Gospel several times as well (Matt 6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43).

Matthew uses the phrase "kingdom of heaven" in several different ways. Sometimes the phrase refers to the nearness or presence of God's rule in the person and works of Jesus (Matt 4:17; 11:12; compare Matt 12:28). At other times he uses the phrase in reference to Jesus' future reign on earth (Matt 8:11; compare Matt 6:10; 13:38–43; 25:1; 26:29). Turner suggests that God's reign was inaugurated during Jesus' earthly ministry and will be consummated when He returns (Turner, *Matthew*, 22).

Blomberg argues that the two phrases "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" are functionally the same in Matthew's Gospel, as both refer to the rule of God rather than the realm of God (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 73). However, dispensationalists believe the phrases "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" refer to two different kingdoms (Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible*, 1003; Walvoord, *Matthew*). In this view, the "kingdom of heaven" is a temporary period of the church age, but the "kingdom of God" is the final, universal age. The kingdom of heaven merges into the kingdom of God at Christ's return.

### **Blessings (Matt 5:3–16; Luke 6:20–23)**

Matthew and Luke both position the Beatitudes at the beginning of their sermons as an introduction to the exhortatory section. There are four main understandings of the Beatitudes:

1. Guelich sees the Beatitudes as ethical entrance requirements or steps into the kingdom by which the poor in spirit ascend and become the children of God (Guelich, "Matthean Beatitudes," 415–34).
2. France sees the Beatitudes as Jesus' call to be different from the people who are not His disciples, and a promise to those who do so (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 159).
3. Turner and Bock see the Beatitudes as pronouncements of kingdom blessings: When people repent, they receive these basic character traits as God's blessing (Matt 4:17; Turner and Bock, *Matthew and Mark*, 80).
4. Hagner views the Beatitudes as the resulting state of recipients of the kingdom of heaven. However, since the consummation of the kingdom is a future event, there is tension for Jesus' disciples in the present (Hagner, *Matthew*, 96).

Both the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain use the Greek word μακάριος (*makarios*) for "bless." According to Brown, this term is used to "Recognize an existing state of happiness or good fortune" rather than express a wish or an invocation of a blessing (compare εὐλόγω, *eulogō*; Brown, *According to John*, 553). In Bailey's view, this suggests

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that the Beatitudes are not statements of what people must do to be blessed, but statements affirming the blessedness that certain people already possess because of a present or future condition (Bailey, *Middle Eastern Eyes*, 68). Jesus does not prescribe action, but affirms a blessed state.

Stein points out the differences in the wording of the blessings of the two sermons. In his view, these differences are an issue of translation (Stein, *Luke*, 198). Stein points out that Jesus originally spoke in Aramaic, so both Matthew and Luke translated Jesus' words. Stein believes Luke's translation is more word-for-word (like the KJV, RSV, and NASB) and Matthew's is more thought-for-thought (like the NIV and NEB).

Fee and Stuart warn against the tendency to harmonize Beatitude sections of the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain and recognize only one account as true. They point out that both sections are canonical (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 139).

### Woes (Luke 6:24–26)

Luke's Sermon on the Plain contains four woes, which contrast his four blessings. Bock believes they serve as a warning and call to repentance to those who trust too much in wealth, comfort, happiness, and popularity (Bock, *Luke*, 582).

### The Antithetical Section (Matt 5:17–48; Luke 6:27–36)

In the antithetical section of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain (Matt 5:17–48; Luke 6:27–36), Jesus contrasts Himself with the law and the prophets. The identification of the theme here is debated, as is Jesus' relation to the Mosaic law and the implications of His ethical statements for His followers.

#### "You Have Heard" Statements

The antithetical section of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain is characterized by the repeated statements "You have heard it said ... but I say to you ..." These statements could be interpreted as follows:

- "You have heard, and *in agreement with* that, I say ..."
- "You have heard, but *in addition to* that, I say ..."
- "You have heard, but *in contrast to* that, I say ..."

#### Jesus' Relation to the Law

Biblical interpreters since the Middle Ages have posed differing views on Jesus' relation to the Mosaic law and the ethical implications of His teachings. For example, Thomas Aquinas believed the law could be broken into three types:

1. Moral law
2. Civil law, which applied only to the nation of Israel
3. Ceremonial law, which Jesus fulfilled on the cross

He believed Matthew 5:17–20 refers to moral law, since the other two types of law were already made obsolete.

France sees this section as a teaching on the fulfillment of the law (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 177). He argues that the Torah pointed to the Messiah. As Messiah, Jesus is the new authority concerning the practical application of the law. Fulfilling the law is no longer a literal observance of regulations, but a deeper issue of discerning the will of God. Some elements of the law may appear to be "abolished" due to the change in their role in the time of fulfillment. The law pointed forward to Jesus, who is the final authority (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 183; see also Carson, *Jesus' Sermon*, 38). Turner likewise sees Jesus as fulfilling the law and the prophets, bringing them to their divinely intended goal (Turner, *Matthew*, 162).

Allison views these as eschatological statements with which Jesus brings to realization what the Law prophesied. Allison sees Jesus as rightly interpreting the law (Allison, *The Sermon*, 59, 61).

Stein suggests that Jesus describes a righteousness or change of heart that surpasses the mere letter of the law. This interpretation is consistent with the use of the term "repentance" ( $\mu \epsilon \tau \alpha \nu \omicron \acute{\epsilon} \omega$ , *metanoēō*) in Matt 4:17, which literally means "changing one's mind" (Arndt et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 640). This new heart causes believers to desire reconciliation rather than simply refrain from murder (Matt 5:21–26). Similarly, this new heart rejects lust rather than simply abstaining from adultery (Matt 5:27–32). Stein points out that this new attitude is accompanied by works (Matt 7:24–27; Stein, *The Method*, 100). Works must accompany intellectual belief (Matt 7:24–27).

Garland and Turner believe Jesus' teaching in Matt 5:21–48 contrasts the legal experts of His day (e.g., Turner, *Matthew*, 165; Garland, *Lord's Prayer*, 62–63). In their view, the teachers of the law failed to recognize the original intent of the law. On the other hand, McNeile believes this teaching illustrates a righteousness that exceeds but is not in opposition to the law (McNeile, *Gospel*, 57).

Hagner and Nolland believe the six illustrations of true righteousness in Matt 5:21–48 can be classified as examples of antithesis (e.g., Hagner, *Matthew*, 112; Nolland, *The Gospel*, 228). However, Turner objects to this classification, arguing that an antithesis is not a simple contrast but an *opposing* contrast. Since Jesus had not come to abolish the law and the prophets, he was not in opposition with them (Turner, *Matthew*, 165).

### The Main Paraenetic Section (Matt 6:1–7:23; Luke 6:37–46)

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The opening verse of the main paraenetic section (Matt 6:1–7:23; Luke 6:37–46) provides the basic principle of the exhortation. It is illustrated by three common practices of righteousness (Turner, *Matthew*, 179):

1. Almsgiving
2. Prayer
3. Fasting

The emphasis of this passage is “for the purpose of being seen by others.” It clarifies that righteous people do not stage their good works for others to see them. The command in Matt 6:1 to not be seen by others seem to contradict Matt 5:16, in which Jesus calls His audience to let people see their good works. Blomberg believes the statements are not contradictory because the contexts are different: In Matthew 5:16 the good works bring glory to God, while in Matt 6:1 they bring glory to self (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 116).

Interpreters have offered varying divisions for the paraenetic section of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. Carson divides Matt 6:19–34 into two distinct units (Carson, *Matthew*, 176), one addressing materialism (Matt 6:19–24) and the other addressing anxiety (Matt 6:25–34). He also views Matt 7:1–6 as a unit: Matt 7:1–5 aims to prevent believers from judging others harshly, and Matt 7:6 is a balancing statement about gullibility (Carson, *Matthew*, 182).

On the other hand, Davies and Allison view Matt 6:19–34 as one unit with four subsections addressing the motivating force behind one's actions (Matt 6:19–21, 22–23, 24, 25–34; Davies and Allison, *Introduction*, 625; compare Turner, *Matthew*, 193). They view Matt 7:1–11 as a single unit addressing the treatment of one's neighbor (Davies and Allison, *Introduction*, 688). Matthew 7:7–11, which concerns prayer, is connected to Matt 7:1–6 (concerning judging one's neighbors) as a petition asking God's guidance in relating properly to neighbors (see also Keener, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 245). Matthew 7:12 finishes this section with a concluding “so,” or “therefore,” possibly forming a bookend in relation to Matt 7:1. The section begins with a “you act so others react” scenario, and ends with an “others act so you react” scenario. However, Matthew 7:12 may also form a bookend with Matt 5:17, with the Golden Rule summarizing the entire body of the sermon (Davies and Allison, *Introduction*, 685–86).

### The Closing (Matt 7:13–27; Luke 6:47–49)

The closing section of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain (Matt 7:13–27; Luke 6:47–49) provides illustrations and an invitation to commitment. In both the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus calls His audience to action—to do or not do, and to follow or not follow. One response leads to life, the other to death. One produces good fruit, the bad fruit. Three illustrations present this invitation:

1. Two gates or ways (Matt 7:13–14)
2. Two trees or fruits (Matt 7:15–23)
3. Two builders or foundations (Matt 7:24–27; Luke 6:47–49)

Witherington argues that these illustrations are placed at the end of the sermon to urge the disciples to take action (Witherington, *Matthew*, 162).

France and Hagner divide Matt 7:13–27 into four sections, classifying Matt 7:21–23 as a separate section concerning judgment (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 146; Hagner, *Matthew*, 181, 185). Blomberg, Turner, and Bock argue that since both Matt 7:15–20 and Matt 7:21–23 refer to teachers or prophets, the judgment of Matt 7:21–23 is better associated with the false teachers of Matt 7:15–20 (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 133; Turner and Bock, *Matthew and Mark*, 117).

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# The Three Kingdoms

## Christ's Kingdom

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**KINGDOM OF GOD, THE.** The whole of Jesus' own preaching, teaching, and ministry centered in these words: "The kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). He came as the Savior-Lamb to rescue and redeem mankind to know his original estate in the divine order. The dynamic of Christian life and ministry is found in understanding the kingdom of God, which is not in "eating and drinking" (that is, ritual performance), but in "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). In a thoroughgoing development constituting 39 brief articles under eight headings, the (1) foundations, (2) terminology, (3) message, (4) character, (5) ministry, (6) conflict, (7) worship, and (8) prophecy of the kingdom are elaborated. Here is a wealth of material to establish a full-orbed perspective on the kingdom of God, the essence of the church's message and life. This study unfolds the balance that calls us to kingdom life and power in the present, while still anticipating the kingdom's final fullness and consummation in the future.

### *Foundations of the Kingdom*

1. God's Sovereignty (Gen. 1:1). The necessary beginning point in studying the theme of "the kingdom of God" is the Bible's opening verse. Here we meet the Sovereign of all the universe, whose *realm*, *reign*, and *regency* are described at the outset. (1) His *realm* (or scope of His rule) is transcendent; that is, not only does it include the entire physical universe, it exceeds it. He existed before all creation, He expands beyond it, and by virtue of having begotten it, He encompasses all that it is. (2) His *reign* (or the power by which He rules) is exercised by His will, His word, and His works. By His own will He creatively decides and designs; by His own word He speaks creation into being; and by His own works, His Spirit displays His unlimited power. (3) His *regency* (or authority to rule) is in His preexistence and holiness. He is there *before* creation "in the beginning." Thus, as its Creator, He deserves to be its Potentate. His benevolent intent in creating things "good" reveals His holy nature (that is, complete and perfect), and thus His moral right to be creation's King. All kingdom power and authority flow from Him.

2. Man's Delegated "Dominion" (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:16-17). In creating man, the Sovereign of the universe makes a choice to delegate to man "dominion...on the earth" (v. 28). Man's power and authority for exercising this rule originate in God's intent to make man in His own image and likeness. Man's ability to sustain his role as delegated ruler of earth will rest in his continued obedience to God's rule as King of all. His power to reign in life will extend only as far as his faithfulness to obey God's law. (See also 1 Chr. 29:10-16.)

3. Before the Fall (Gen. 1:31). The original order of man's environment on earth must be distinguished from what it became following the impact of man's Fall, the Curse, and the eventual Deluge (Is. 45:18; Rom. 8:20; 2 Pet. 3:4-7). The agricultural, zoological, geological, and meteorological disharmony to which creation became subject must not be attributed to God. The perfect will of God, as founding King of creation, is *not* manifest in the presence of death, disease, discord, and disaster any more than it is manifest in human sin. Our present world does not reflect the kingdom order He originally intended for man's enjoyment on earth, nor does it reflect God's kingdom as it shall ultimately be experienced on this planet. Understanding this, we should be cautious not to attribute to "God's will" or to "acts of God" those characteristics of our world that resulted from the ruin of God's original order by reason of man's Fall.

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<sup>17</sup> Long, M. T. (2016). [Sermon on the Mount/Plain, Comparison](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

## The Three Kingdoms Christ's Kingdom

4. Impact of the Fall (Gen. 3:16-24). Through disobedience to the terms of his rule, man “falls,” thus experiencing the loss of his “dominion” (vv. 22-23). Everything of his delegated realm (earth) comes under a curse as his relationship with God, the fountainhead of his power to rule, is severed (vv. 17-18). Thus man loses the “life” power essential to ruling in God’s kingdom (vv. 19, 22). Beyond the tragedy of man’s loss, two other facts unfold. First, through his disobedience to God and submission to the Serpent’s suggestions, man’s rule has been forfeited to the Serpent. Revelation 12:9 verifies that the spirit employing the snake’s form was Satan himself. The domain originally delegated to man now falls to Satan, who becomes administrator of this now-cursed realm. The Serpent’s “seed” and “head” indicate a continual line (seed) of evil offspring extending Satan’s rule (head) (v. 15). However, a second fact offers hope. Amid the tragedy of this sequence of events, God begins to move redemptively, and a plan for recovering man’s lost estate is promised (v. 15) and set in motion with the first sacrifice (v. 21).

5. After the Flood (Gen. 8:20-9:17). Following the Deluge, a renewed order is established. Noah’s faith, which occasioned his deliverance, is now manifest in an expression of worship to God as he disembarks from the ark (8:20-22). God declares His covenant with Noah (9:8-17) after restating His purpose to make man to be fruitful and multiply, as at the beginning. However, other factors are not as at the beginning; notably the relationship of God with man, as well as of man with creation. The Flood has not reversed the loss of man’s original dominion. He is still fallen, though thankfully a recipient of God’s mercy. Further, the animals will fear mankind from this time on (9:2), which was not characteristic of their relationship prior to this. In the ultimate restoration of God’s kingdom on earth, the original fearless order will be regained (Is. 11:6-9). Notwithstanding these deficiencies, a cleansed realm for seeking God’s kingdom first is newly available to man, and again God asserts man’s responsibility for administering earth with an accountability to Him (9:1-7). The Flood has not neutralized the influence of the Serpent, nor has it changed mankind’s capacity for rebellion against God’s rule. Nevertheless, new hope dawns with promise for the eventual recovery of what was lost of his first estate.

6. Prototype “Kingdom” Person (Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham is shown in both Old and New Testaments as the prototype of all who experience God’s processes of seeking to reinstate man through redemption, first and foremost, in his relationship to God by faith, without works (Rom. 4:1-25). But too seldom is the second facet of redemption noted. Abraham is also shown as a case of God’s program to recover man’s “reign in life” (Rom. 5:17). Abraham is designated as the “father” of all who walk his pathway of faith (Rom. 4:12). As such, he is God’s revealed example of His plan to eventually reestablish His kingdom’s rule in all the earth through people of His covenant. Through Abraham, whom He wills to become “a great nation” (restoring rule) and to whom He chooses to give a “great name” (restoring authority), God declares His plans to beget innumerable children who will be modeled after this prototypical “father of faith.” This truth is confirmed in Romans 4:13, where Abraham’s designation as “heir of the world” parallels Jesus’ promise that His followers, who humble themselves in faith, shall also be recipients of “the kingdom” and shall “inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:3-5).

7. Patriarchal Examples (Gen. 26:1-5; 28:1-22). The promise of God to Abraham that he would be “heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13) is repeated to his offspring, Isaac and Jacob, in succession. God’s words and dealings in the lives of the patriarchs reveal that His unfolding program of redemption is dual: (1) restoring relationship *to* God to establish fellowship with Him and (2) restoring rulership in life *under* God to reestablish human ability to “rule” in life’s practical details of family and business. Thus, under His covenant, God promised these patriarchs both *progeny*—a family line—and *property*—an economic base. This illustrates God’s progressive processing of His redemptive promise. He not only provides for restored fellowship with Himself (relationship), but covenants for human fulfillment and personal fruitfulness in life. This plan is geared not only to bless His people, but to make them a blessing to others. Joseph’s life elaborates this principle. God redeems him from the pit by His merciful providence, then raises him to rulership in Egypt, for the saving of nations (Genesis 37-50).

The “kingdom” concept of God’s delegating His rule on earth to be administrated through those who walk with Him is birthed at creation. Although damaged at man’s Fall, it is progressively being reinstated as a redemptive goal and is demonstrated in those who accept His covenant.

8. Human Responsibility (1 Chr. 29:10-16). No text in the Bible more magnificently declares God’s sovereign power: there is no one like the Lord, the Almighty One, whose glory fills the universe. And yet, in the center of this grand anthem of acknowledgment to that towering truth, David asserts that although the kingdom is God’s (v. 11), God

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gives resources that are man's to administrate. Verse 14 literally reads, "Everything that exists is from You, and we administer it from Your hand." God is the fountainhead of all life and power; man is the appointed heir for its management. Psalms 8:6 and 115:16 affirm that while the created universe and the glory of the heavens are God's and God's alone, He has delegated the stewardship of earth's affairs to mankind. Noble views of God's sovereignty must be balanced with a complementary view of man's duties and redeemed capacities. Neglect of this balance, while seeming to extol God's greatness, can produce apathy or irresponsible attitudes. For example, God does not predestine mismanaged resources, families, politics, and so on, any more than He does human sinning. Man is responsible and accountable for earth's problems and—reinstated under God—is intended to become the agent for their solution. He can only become such by drawing on God's sovereign wisdom, power, and resource—that is, on God's "kingdom." Just as man's sin and Fall have damaged the potential partnership between the Creator and His appointed heir to this planet, redemption has set the recovery in motion. Renewed under God, the redeemed may, in fact, partner with God and thereby decisively assist in the reestablishment of God's rule over circumstances and situations on earth. But this only operates under the divine order within redemption's plan under divine grace and through man's receiving divine power by God's Spirit.

### *Terminology of the Kingdom*

9. Defining the Hope (Matt. 3:1-2). The New Testament records 137 references to "the kingdom," and over one hundred of these are during Jesus' ministry, as His entire teaching and approach as Messiah—the Savior-King—center on this theme. To what does "the kingdom" refer? It refers to God's sovereign rule in the universe—He is the King of the heavens. (See Gen. 1:1.) But more specifically, here it refers to the entry of God's long-anticipated Anointed One—the prophesied Messiah, the promised Son of David who would not be the Savior, Deliverer, and King of only Israel, but of all mankind. "The Gentiles" (or all nations)—*all flesh*—were promised recipients of this hope (Is. 9:6-7; 11:10; 40:5). Declaring the kingdom "at hand," that is, "drawing near," John was announcing that the rule of God's King was about to overthrow the power and rule of all evil—both human and hellish. The "kingdom" was near because the King was here. And His presence, introducing the power of "the kingdom of God," meant a new world of potential hope to mankind. Man would no more need be held hostage to either the rule of *death* over mankind, resultant from human sin and sinning, or to the *deadening* rule of oppressive human systems, political or otherwise. Further, the kingdom of darkness would be confronted and the death, deprivation, disease, and destruction levied by satanic power would begin to be overthrown. As God's King, Jesus offers the blessing of God's rule, now available to bring life to every human experience, as well as deliverance from the dominance of either flesh or the Devil.

10. Synonymous Expressions (Matt. 19:23-24). This text uses the phrases "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" interchangeably. In doing so, it sufficiently demonstrates that the two terms are meant to refer to one and the same thing: the kingdom. Although some make a labored distinction between them, this text and ten others in the Gospels clearly show that the "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are verifiably synonyms. Matthew is the only New Testament writer who used the term "kingdom of heaven." In doing so, he showed a sensitivity toward his originally intended audience of Jewish readers, for whom too frequent a use of the name of "God" would have seemed irreverent. By a variety of terms Matthew refers to "the kingdom" fifty times in his Gospel: thirty-two times as "kingdom of heaven"; five times as "kingdom of God"; four times as the "Father's" kingdom; and twice as the kingdom of "the Son of Man." The remaining seven references are simply to "the kingdom" without other designation. This variety in the usage, made by the only one using the phrase "kingdom of heaven," surely shows these terms to be synonyms for the kingdom.

11. John's Writings (John 18:36). John is the only Gospel writer who records these words of Jesus: "My kingdom is not of this world." Near the end of the first century, when John was writing his Gospel, Christians were often assailed with the accusation that their goals were not spiritual, but political. The Roman Empire was being filled with reborn citizens of a heavenly kingdom, but their "kingdom of God" terminology could be misunderstood. Thus, John adopts the phrase "eternal life," as much to show the new *quality* of life Jesus Christ has brought as to describe its *quantity*. The idea of "eternal life" describes a divine *dimension* of life available to mankind, as well as a destined *duration* of "everlasting" endlessness. The words "eternal life" occur fifteen times in John's writings, "the kingdom of God" only six. Some have thought John's relatively infrequent use of "kingdom of God" suggested this message application was confined only to the time of Jesus' ministry and the birth of "the church age."

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Notwithstanding the fact that the birth of the church did introduce a new era in human history, the message of “the gospel of the kingdom” was not changed. For example, see the thrust of its being taught and preached throughout Acts (20:25; 28:23, 30-31).

12. Paul's Writings (Col. 1:27-28). “In Christ” is the expression Paul most frequently uses to designate the new life potential through the gospel. The Messiah (Christ) being King, the term clearly places the believer in the circle of all that is represented and contained in the King, His salvation conquest, and His personal rule. The essential truth is that the Savior-King has come, and in Him the rule of God has altered the limits sin has heretofore placed on individuals. People no longer need be ruled by their carnality (flesh) or controlled by evil (the devil). Being freed, that is, transferred to a new kingdom, they can know the joy of a relationship with God through the power of the Cross and can realize a beginning reinstatement of their rulership under God, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thereby, living in the King's kingdom brings a dual hope: eternity with Christ and the promise of grace to begin “reigning in life.” Now, “in Christ” designates the new life that may be lived in the benefits of, and by the power of, the King Jesus, “who has brought life [reigning in life presently in Christ—Rom. 5:17] and immortality [reigning forever with Christ—Rev. 22:5] to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).

### *The Message of the Kingdom*

13. The Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15). The synoptic Gospels and Acts make at least twenty direct references to the preaching of “the gospel of the kingdom” from John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-2), throughout Jesus' ministry (Mark 1:14-15), in the disciples' ministry during Jesus' ministry (Luke 9:1-2), and throughout Acts. Jesus prophesied this same message shall be taken to the ends of the world (Matt. 24:14), commissioning His disciples to do this and promising the Holy Spirit's power for the task (Mark 16:15-18; Acts 1:3-8).

It is clear that the early church proclaimed the same message Jesus preached, that is, “the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 30-31). Also, they experienced the same confirming evidences present in His ministry.

There is only one gospel: Jesus preached it, transmitted it to His disciples, and has committed it to His church. Paul warned against ever receiving any other gospel. “Any other” may be either a message of outright error or an argument for a diluted message, devoid of power though nominally Christian. Jude 3 urges us always to contend for the original, “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” Hold to the full “gospel of the kingdom,” and expect the Lord to confirm that “word” with the signs He promised (Mark 16:15-18).

14. Repentance (Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17). The first call of the kingdom is to repentance. The implications of biblical repentance are threefold: (1) renunciation and reversal, (2) submission and teachability, and (3) continual shapeability. There is no *birth* into the kingdom without hearing the call to salvation, renouncing one's sin, and turning from sin toward Christ the Savior (Acts 3:19).

There is no *growth* in the kingdom without obedience to Jesus' commandments and a childlike responsiveness as a disciple of Jesus, yielding to the teaching of God's Word (James 1:21-25).

There is no lifelong increase of *fruit* as a citizen of the kingdom without a willingness to accept the Holy Spirit's correction and guidance (Eph. 5:30).

15. New Birth (John 3:1-5). Upon repentance, a new order of life opens to the believer in Jesus Christ. Jesus used the figure of “new birth” to dramatically indicate three things: (1) Without new birth, there is no life and no relationship with God (14:6). (2) In new birth, new perspective comes as we “see the kingdom of God” (3:3), God's Word becomes clear, and the Holy Spirit's works and wonders are believed and experienced—faith is alive. (3) Through new birth we are introduced—literally we “enter” (v. 5)—to a new realm, where God's new kingdom order can be realized (2 Cor. 5:17). New birth is more than simply being “saved.” It is a requalifying experience, opening up the possibilities of our whole being to the supernatural dimension of life and fitting us for a beginning in God's kingdom order.

16. A Present and Future Kingdom (Matt. 13:1-52). In this chapter, Jesus introduces parables as a means of teaching “kingdom” truths (vv. 10-11). Of the forty parables Jesus gave, He made direct references to the kingdom in nineteen. These stories clearly relate to different time frames. Some impact the present, teaching (1) the need for kingdom people to have hearing ears (vv. 3-23); (2) the breadth of the kingdom's spread (vv. 31-35); and (3) the

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cost of the kingdom's acquisition (vv. 44-46). Others relate to the future, teaching (1) the final disposing of the fruit of the Adversary's hindrance (vv. 36-43) and (2) the final disposition of the mixed ingathering from kingdom outreach (vv. 47-51). In mixing these two aspects of the "kingdom," Jesus helps us appreciate the kingdoms as both present and prospective. The message of the kingdom is two-edged and relates to two frames of *time*: First, God, in Christ, is *now* recovering man from his double loss—relationship *with* God and of rulership *under* God. He promised this at man's Fall, illustrated it in the patriarchs and Israel's history, and *now* the King has come to begin fully bringing it about. The kingdom is being realized *presently*, in partial and personal ways, as it is spread *through* all the earth by the Holy Spirit's power in the church. Second, the kingdom will be realized *finally* in consummate and conclusive ways only at the return of Jesus Christ and by His reign *over* all the earth. What we experience of His triumph now, in part, will then be fully manifest (1 Cor. 13:9-10; 15:24; Rev. 11:15). This complete view allows for our understanding and applying the principles of "kingdom come" without falling into the confusion of expecting *now* what the Bible says will only be *then*.

17. People of the Kingdom (Col. 1:13). The "transference" of the believer, from under Satan's authority to Christ's, is described as movement into another "kingdom." Ensuing verses describe Christ's redemption as bringing us to a place of "completeness," that is, of spiritual adequacy, authority, or ability to live victoriously over and above the invisible powers of darkness (vv. 14-16; 2:6-10). This becomes functionally true, as opposed to merely theoretically so, when we (1) live and love as *citizens* of the heavenly kingdom (Phil. 3:20); (2) utilize this kingdom's *currency*, which is of irresistible value (Acts 3:6); (3) operate as *ambassadors* authorized to offer kingdom peace and reconciliation to those yet unrenewed in Christ (2 Cor. 5:20); and (4) serve as the kingdom *militia*, girded for prayerful conflict against the dark powers controlling so much of this present world (Eph. 6:10-20). The terminology of "the kingdom" holds more than poetic pictures. It is practically applicable to all our living.

18. Kingdom within You (Luke 17:20-21). Fundamental to New Testament truth is that the kingdom of God is the spiritual reality and dynamic available to each person who receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. To receive Him—the King—is to receive His kingly rule, not only *in* your life and *over* your affairs, but *through* your life and *by* your service and love. "The kingdom of God is within you," Jesus said.

This will never be possible if we operate independently of God's power and grace. The possibility of reinstatement to rulership is brought about only through the forgiveness of sins and full redemption in Christ through the Cross. The Bible never suggests either (1) that there exists in man a divine spark, which may be fanned to flame by noble human efforts, or (2) that godlikeness is somehow resident in man's potential, as though human beings are or may become "gods." To the contrary, man is lost in darkness and alienated from God (Eph. 4:18; 2:12).

However, full salvation brings restored relationship to God and a full potential for His kingdom's ruling "within us" as we walk with Him. Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to cause the anointing of His messiahship to be transmitted to us (Is. 61:1-3; Luke 4:18; John 1:16; 1 John 2:20, 27; 4:17). So it is only on these terms that a human being can say, "The kingdom of God is within me."

### *Character and the Kingdom*

19. Basic Traits (Matt. 5:1-7:27). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus outlines the primary attributes of people who receive the rule of the kingdom He brings. Nine direct references to "the kingdom" are in this sermon, calling for: humility (5:3), willingness to suffer persecution (5:10), earnest attention to God's commandments (5:19), refusal to substitute false piety for genuinely right behavior (5:20), a life of prayer (6:10, 13), prioritizing spiritual over material values (6:33), and above all, acknowledging Christ's lordship by obeying the revealed will of God (7:21). Clearly, the authority Christ hopes to delegate to His own is intended to be exercised by disciples willing to accept renewal in soul and behavior, as well as rebirth through forgiveness of sin. To these, obviously, the call to "kingdom" living and ministry includes the expectation that Holy Spirit-begotten fruit and gifts will develop in the believer. The same Spirit that distributes gifts of power for kingdom service also works in us to beget kingly qualities of life, love, and a holy character (John 15:1-17; Gal. 5:22-23).

20. Childlikeness (Matt. 18:1-4). Jesus confronts the tendency of humanity to associate authority with an exercise of dominance over others. The dominion or authority in kingdom life God wants to reinstate in us is for victorious, fruitful living and for the overthrow of hellish powers, not for gaining control of others or for serving our own interests. His call to childlike humility and a servantlike heart (John 13:1-17) establishes the spirit and style by

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which the authority of the believer is to be exercised as an agent of God's kingdom power. (See Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:14-15; Luke 18:16-17.)

21. Forgiveness (Matt. 18:18-35). Jesus' prefacing words make this "kingdom" parable of the unforgiving servant especially crucial. He warns against the human capacity to forget God's gracious gift of forgiveness and allow smallness of soul to breed unforgiveness. (1) Jesus showed how unforgiveness can restrict what God would do in others. (Note: The jailed fellow-servant is still in prison at the story's end, revealing the power of unforgiveness to "bind" circumstances to an undesirable level of perpetual problem.) (2) Jesus teaches how the spirit of unforgiveness (the torturers, literally "bill collectors") exacts its toll on our bodies, minds, and emotions. Finally, every "kingdom" person is advised to sustain a forgiving heart toward all other persons. Kingdom privileges and power must not be mishandled. The "binding" power of unforgiveness is potentially dangerous to any of us.

Matthew 18:18-19 is frequently quoted to assert the believer's authority in prayer. But the power to "bind and loose" is quickly shown to be as much of a liability as an asset if unforgiveness remains in the people of God's kingdom.

22. Integrity and Morality (1 Cor. 6:9-10). The privilege of becoming an authorized and empowered representative of God's kingdom and of ministering Christ's life and the Holy Spirit's gifts to others is not the heritage of the unholy. Twice the text says certain people will not "inherit the kingdom of God," and then designates broad categories of people who are excluded from enjoying the resources and rewards of righteousness. (See also Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5.)

Although our righteousness before God is through Christ's work alone, and while it remains timelessly true that we cannot earn any spiritual gift or right to function in the power of the Holy Spirit, integrity and morality of character are nonetheless essential to the "kingdom person."

Holiness of heart and life keeps the lines of communication with God unjumbled, by keeping any private or carnal agenda out of the way. They also insure the Holy Spirit free access for distributing His gifts and fulfilling the Father's will in any situation.

### *Ministry of the Kingdom*

23. The Holy Spirit (Mark 1:15). Jesus' ministry did not begin until He received His "anointing" as Messiah—the empowering that came through the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him (v. 10). Though conceived and born by the Spirit's power (Luke 1:35) and sinless His whole lifetime (John 8:46), He did not attempt ministry without the Spirit's power. He insisted John baptize Him, not for repentance, but because He knew the Holy Spirit would come upon Him at that time (Matt. 3:13-17). From that time, He is led of the Spirit (v. 12) and moves into ministry—declaring the presence of God's kingdom and manifesting its miracles, signs, and wonders (Luke 4:14-15; Matt. 4:23-25).

This pathway points each believer to the need for power, if kingdom ministry is to be advanced through us—His church. Like Him, we, too, are "born of the Spirit" (John 3:5-6). Though our spiritual birth is not as His biological Virgin Birth, the point remains. Spiritual rebirth saves, but spiritual endowment is needed for ministering in kingdom power. Similarly, our justification in Christ—being declared sinless (2 Cor. 5:21)—does not qualify for kingdom power in ministry. In His incarnation Jesus' Person and perfection exceeded ours in every way, yet Jesus still acknowledged the need for His *own* receiving of the power of the Holy Spirit to pursue His ministry. What more needs to be said? Let each of us *personally* hear His command: "Receive the Holy Spirit!" (John 20:22).

24. Authority for Ministry (Luke 9:1-2). Luke shows the flow of power of Jesus the King, who extends the delivering and benevolent rule of the kingdom of God over hell's works (demon power) and human hurt (disease). The order of ministry that began with Jesus (8:1) continues to be exercised by His disciples as He trained them for ministry (9:1-2), and later will issue in the same type of ministry in the church as it spreads the gospel message (Acts 8:4-12). This Gospel throbs with confidence in the full transparency of power and authority for ministry by Jesus to His disciples, then and now:

- We may expect victory over the powers of darkness and their operations (10:19).
- We are assigned to "do business" as authorized representatives of our Lord until He returns (19:13).

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- We are promised the Father's pleasure "to give" us the kingdom, that is, to supply us with His peace and power (12:32).

Dominion over evil has been given, but we can expect to see spiritual breakthrough to the degree we receive and apply that authority in prayer, preaching, teaching, and personal ministry.

25. Prayer and Intercession (Luke 11:2-4). Jesus' words "Your kingdom come" are more than a suggestion to pray for a distant millennial day, for everything in this prayer is current. This prayer is not a formula for repetition so much as it is an outline for expansion. Worship is to be longer than a sentence. Petitions are not confined to bread. Forgiveness is to be requested in specifics, not generalities, and prayer for the entry of God's kingdom into present earthborn situations is not accomplished in a momentary utterance. The verb mood and tense of "Your kingdom come" essentially says, "Father, let Your kingdom come here and now!"

Such prayerful *intervention* is called *intercession*. Motivation toward such prayer occurs when we recognize the importance Jesus placed on prayer in helping us serve in our roles as "kingdom administrators." Without the intervention of God's kingdom rule through prayer, earth's circumstances will succumb to inevitable consequences. Earthly scenes of need must be penetrated by God's "will here as in heaven." Either the weakness of man's rule (the flesh) or the viciousness of the devil's works will prevail. God's power alone can change things and bring heaven's rule (kingdom) instead, and the honor and the glory for prayer's answers are His. However, the praying is ours to do: unless we ask for the intervention of His kingdom and obey His prayer-lessons, nothing will change. All kingdom ministry begins with, is sustained by, and will triumph through prayer.

26. Casting Out Demons (Luke 11:20). Jesus indicates that one signal of a true ministry of the kingdom includes the casting out of demons. He models this in His ministry and promises it as a timeless sign confirming the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom (Mark 16:17). He also balances this aspect of ministry for His disciples, who at first were amazed to experience such power, exclaiming, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" (Luke 10:17). While affirming the place and value of this ministry (vv. 18-19), Jesus still reminds them of a foundational truth. Power over demons is not the central reason for rejoicing; rather, their salvation has registered them as heaven's representatives. That is the real grounds for authority in the spiritual realm.

27. Receiving Kingdom Power (Acts 1:3-8). As Jesus presented post-Resurrection teaching "pertaining to the kingdom of God" (v. 3), His disciples asked if now—with the Cross behind—the ultimate messianic kingdom would come. "It is not yours to know the future," He says, "but it is yours to receive the Spirit's power!" With those words, He makes three points: (1) The Holy Spirit is the Person and the power by which assistance and ability are given for serving, for sharing the life and power of God's kingdom with others. (2) The Holy Spirit's power must be "received"; it is not an automatic experience. As surely as the Holy Spirit indwells each believer (Rom. 8:9), so surely will He fill and overflow (John 7:37-39) each who receives the Holy Spirit in childlike faith. (3) When the Holy Spirit fills you, you will know it. Jesus said it and the disciples found it true (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4). Have you received the Holy Spirit? (19:1-6). You may, for the promise is as fully yours today as at any time in the past (2:38-39).

### *Conflict and the Kingdom*

28. Earth's Evil "Ruler" (Luke 4:14-32). As Jesus confronts Satan, He dramatically exposes the Adversary's relationship to this present world. Note the significance in Satan's offer to Jesus of "all the kingdoms of the world." Here we see the Adversary as administrator of the curse on this planet, a role he has held since man's dominion was lost and forfeited at the Fall. Because of this, Jesus does not contest the devil's right to make that offer of this world's kingdoms and glory, but He pointedly denies the terms for their being gained. Jesus knows He is here to regain and ultimately win them, but He will do so on the Father's terms, not the Adversary's. Still, the present world systems are largely grounded by the limited but powerful and destructive rule of the one Jesus calls "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 16:30). Understanding these facts, we are wise not to attribute to God anything of the disorder of our confused, sin-riddled, diseased, tragedy-ridden, and tormented planet. "This present evil age" (Gal. 1:4) "lies *under the sway of the wicked one*" (1 John 5:19). But Jesus also said that Satan's rule "will be cast down," and that he "has nothing in Me," that is, no control over Christ or Christ's own. "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

29. Taking It by Force (Matt. 11:12). Jesus asserts the "violence" of the kingdom. The unique grammatical construction of the text does not make clear if the kingdom of God is the victim of violence or if, as the kingdom

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advances in victory, it does so through violent spiritual conflict and warfare—but the context does. Jesus' references to the nonreligious style of John and the confrontive, miraculous ministry of Elijah teach that the kingdom of God makes its penetration by a kind of violent entry opposing the human status quo. It transcends the "softness" (v. 8) of staid religious formalism and exceeds the pretension of child's play (vv. 16-17). It refuses to "dance to the music" of society's expectation that the religious community provide either entertainment ("We played the flute") or dead traditionalism ("We mourned").

Jesus defines the "violence" of His kingdom's expansion by defining the "sword" and "fire" He has brought as different from the battle techniques of political or military warfare (compare Matt. 10:34-39 and Luke 12:49-53 with John 18:36). The upheaval caused by the kingdom of God is not caused by political provocation or armed advance. It is the result of God's order, shaking relationships, households, cities, and nations by the entry of the Holy Spirit's power working in people. (See also Luke 16:16.)

30. Grounds of Authority (Col. 2:13-15). Jesus Christ's triumph over sin and evil powers was accomplished in "it"—that is, in *the Cross*. This text, joined to and studied beside others (Eph. 2:13-16; Gal. 3:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:14-17; Rom. 5:6-15; and Rev. 12:10-11), firmly establishes Jesus' suffering, shed blood, sacrificial death, and resurrection triumph as the only adequate and available grounds for ransom from sin, reconciliation to God, redemption from slavery, and restoration. The Cross is the sole hope and means for full reinstatement to relationship with God and rulership under Him—to "reign in life" (Rom. 5:17). To avoid presumption or imbalance regarding the message and ministry of the present power of the kingdom of God, we must focus on and regularly review two points: the source and the grounds for the delegation of such authority and power. (1) God's sovereign authority and almighty power is the *source* from which mankind derives any ability to share in the exercise of God's kingdom power. (2) But even more important, seeing sinful, fallen man had lost all claim to his early privilege of rulership under God, let us remember the *grounds* upon which all kingdom privilege or power may be restored and by which such spiritual ministry with authority may be exercised.

31. Pressing In (Luke 16:16). Jesus declares the advance of the kingdom of God is the result of two things: *preaching* and *pressing in*. He shows the gospel of the kingdom must be proclaimed with spiritual passion. In every generation believers have to determine whether they will respond to this truth with sensible minds and sensitive hearts. To overlook it will bring a passivity that limits the ministry of God's kingdom to extending the terms of truth and love—that is, teaching or educating and engaging in acts of kindness. Without question, we must do these things. However, apart from (1) an impassioned pursuit of prayer, (2) confrontation with the demonic, (3) expectation of the miraculous, and (4) a burning heart for evangelism, the kingdom of God makes little penetration in the world.

At the same time, overstatement of "pressing" is likely to produce rabid fanatics who justify any behavior in Jesus' name as applying the boldness spoken of here. Such travesties in church history as the Crusades and various efforts at politicizing in a quest to produce righteousness in society through earth-level rule are extremes we must learn to reject. "Pressing in" is accomplished first in prayer warfare, coupled with a will to surrender one's life and self-interests in order to gain God's kingdom goals.

32. Suffering, Tribulation (Acts 14:21-22). Paul not only taught the joy and peace of the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:7), its power (1 Cor. 14:20), and its present authority to cause the believer to triumph over evil (2 Tim. 4:8; Rom. 16:20). He also taught that "kingdom people" experience trial, suffering, and not always an "instant victory" (2 Thess. 1:5). Triumph and victory may characterize the attitude of each citizen of the kingdom of God, and Holy Spirit-empowered authority is given to be applied to realize results. Yet, God did not promise life without struggle. The "dominion" being recovered through the presence of the King within us and ministered by the Holy Spirit's power through us is never taught by the apostles as preempting all suffering.

This text reminds us that victory only comes through battle, and triumph only follows trial. Only a weak view of the truth of the kingdom of God pretends otherwise. Another weak view surrenders to negative circumstances on the proposition that we are predestined to problems and therefore should merely tolerate them. The Bible teaches that suffering, trial, and all order of human difficulty are unavoidable; but God's Word also teaches they may all be overcome. The presence of the King and the power of His kingdom in our lives make us neither invulnerable nor immune to life's struggles. But they do bring the promise of victory: provision in need, strength for the day, and healing, comfort, and saving help.

*Worship and the Kingdom*

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33. A Kingdom of Priests (Ex. 19:5-7). In these verses the Lord indicates His objective for His delivered people. His purpose for their destiny requires their understanding His essential priority for them: worship—His redemptive goal and kingdom reinstatement. As they learn to worship as a nation of priests, they will discover His foundational means for their possessing their future victories (as ones whose domain, or “kingdom,” He has promised). Their restored rule, from sharing to “kingdom” possession, extends from their walk before God in worship. Israel’s deliverance from Egypt is not only a triumphant testimony; it is God’s timeless type, showing His plans and methods for the church’s deliverance and intended conquest (1 Cor. 10:11).

34. “Establishing” God’s Throne (Ps. 22:3). The Psalms were the praise hymnal of the early church, and as such are laden with principles fully applicable for New Testament living today. Few principles are more essential to our understanding than this one: the *presence* of God’s kingdom power is directly related to the practice of God’s *praise*. The verb “enthroned” indicates that wherever God’s people exalt His name, He is ready to manifest His kingdom’s power in the way most appropriate to the situation, as His rule is invited to invade our setting.

It is this fact that properly leads many to conclude that in a very real way, praise prepares a *specific* and *present* place for God among His people. Some have chosen the term “establish His throne” to describe this “enthroning” of God in our midst by our worshiping and praising welcome. God awaits the prayerful and praise-filled worship of His people as an entry point for His kingdom to “come”—to enter, that *His* “will be done” in human circumstances. (See Luke 11:2-4 and Ps. 93:2.) We do not manipulate God, but align ourselves with the great kingdom truth: *His* is the power, ours is the privilege (and responsibility) to welcome Him into our world—our private, present world or the circumstances of our society.

35. Inviting God’s Rule (Ps. 93:2). “Your throne is established from of old.” The notion that kingdom advance “establishes” God’s throne needs clearer understanding. It is foolish to think man could add to or diminish the power or glory of God’s kingdom rule. However, it is equally unwise to overlook the responsible place the redeemed have been given. We are to *welcome* the kingdom and administer situations on earth by inviting the overarching might of God’s Spirit to move into difficult or impossible circumstances and transform them. This is done by praise: “In everything [not “for” everything] give thanks [fill the situation with praise], for this is God’s will for you” (1 Thess. 5:17). Thus we welcome the overruling power of God’s presence into any situation we face. Pray, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done—here.” Then, set up a place for God’s throne to enter by filling your life’s settings with praise. As Gideon’s trumpeters (Judg. 7:17-22) and Jehoshaphat’s choir (2 Chr. 20:20-22) confounded their enemies and paved the way for the victory the Lord said He would give, so praise brings the same entry of the King’s kingdom today.

36. Worship and Praise (Rev. 1:5-6). In the opening of Revelation, John introduces himself as a brother and companion in the struggle we all face (v. 9). His words “in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ” point to the dual facts of Christ’s present kingdom triumph and the ongoing presence of evil and warfare that exact the patience of the church as the kingdom advances among and through us. In prefacing the broad arenas of prophecy about to be unfolded, John addresses two very important *present* truths: (1) We, Christ’s redeemed, are loved and are washed from our sins—a present state (v. 6). (2) We, through His glorious dominion, have been designated “kings and priests” to God—also a present calling. Thus, these dual offices give perspective on our authority and duty and how we most effectively may advance the kingdom of God.

First, we are said to be kings in the sense that under the King of kings we are the new breed—the reborn, to whom God has delegated authority to extend and administer the powers of His rule. Of course, this involves faithful witness to the gospel in the power of the Spirit and loving service to humanity in the love of God. But it also involves confrontation with dark powers of hell, assertive prayer warfare, and an expectation of the miraculous works of God (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-20; 1 Cor. 2:4.). Further, this authority is only fully accomplished in the spirit of praiseful worship, as we exercise the office of “priests.” Some translations read, “a kingdom of priests,” which emphasizes that the rule is only effective when the priestly mission is faithfully attended. Worship is foundational to kingdom advance. The power of the believer before God’s throne, worshiping the Lamb and exalting in the Holy Spirit of praise, is mightily confounding to the Adversary. (See Ex. 19:5-7 and Ps. 22:3.)

37. Priority of Worship (1 Pet. 2:9). As a “royal” priesthood, the kingly nature of the redeemed worshiper is noted. This passage is rooted in God’s call to ancient Israel (see Ex. 19:5-7). Peter and John (Rev. 1:5-6) draw this truth to

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full application and prophetic fulfillment in the New Testament believer. As with Israel, deliverance through the blood of the Lamb is but the beginning. As promised, dominion and destiny will unfold as their priestly duty is fulfilled. True authority is always related to a walk in purity and a constancy in worship. The spirit of worship is essential to all advance of the kingdom. Just as ancient Israel will only take the Promised Land while doing battle from a foundation of righteous worship before the Lord, so with the contemporary church. We will only experience promised power for evangelism and spiritual victories as we prioritize and grow in our worship of the living God. Kingdom power is kept from pollution this way, as kingdom people keep humbly praiseful before the King—and witness His works of power with joy. (See also Rev. 1:5-6.)

### *Prophecy and the Kingdom*

38. Old Testament: Possessing the Kingdom (Dan. 7:21-22). Daniel's prophecy in chapter 7 not only spans the spiritual struggle covering the ages through Messiah's First and Second Coming, but it uses two terms important to perceiving the biblical truth of the kingdom of God: "dominion" and "possess." "Dominion" (from Chaldee, *shelet*, "to govern, prevail, dominate") is in the hands of world powers (vv. 6, 12) until the Coming of the Son of Man, at which time it is taken by Him forever (vv. 13-14). But an interim struggle is seen between the First and Second Coming of Messiah. During this season, the saints "possess" (Chaldee, *chacan*, "to hold on or occupy") the kingdom. This communicates a process of long struggle as the redeemed ("saints") "possess" what they have "received" (v. 18). The scenario reads: (1) After the "judgment was made in favor of the saints" (a forecast of the pivotal impact of Christ's Cross upon which hinged both man's redemption as well as his reinstatement to the potential of his rule under God), an extended struggle ensues. (2) This struggle is described as the "time [which] came for the saints to possess the kingdom." They do battle against sinister adversaries and experience a mix of victories and apparent defeats (v. 25). The prophecy unveils the present age of the kingdom, which is one of ongoing struggle—with victory upon victory for the church. Yet it withholds its conclusive triumph until Christ comes again.

This prophecy also balances the question of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. (1) God's sovereignty accomplishes the foundational victory (v. 22) and in the Cross achieves the decisive victory allowing the saints new dimensions for advance and conquest. (2) He entrusts the responsibility for that advance to His own to "possess the kingdom," entering into conflict with the adversary, at times at the expense of their apparent defeat (v. 26). (3) However, movement toward victory is theirs as they press the "judgment" of the "court" (vv. 22, 26) and seize realms controlled by evil. They wrestle the dominion from hellish powers, continuing in warfare until the ultimate seating of the Son of Man (vv. 14, 27).

Prophetic systems vary as to how and when these words unfold on the calendar of church history, for the passage is subject to different schemes of interpretation, each with different projected chronologies. But the foundational fact remains that an agelong struggle between "the saints" and the power of evil in the world calls each believer to a commitment to steadfast battle, a mixture of victories with setbacks, and a consummate triumph anticipated at Christ's Coming. In the meantime, we "receive" the kingdom and pursue victories for our King, by His power, making intermittent gains—all of which are based on "the judgment" achieved through the Cross.

39. New Testament: Agelong Warfare (Rev. 12:10-11). John's prophecy in chapter 12 conveys the same essential message as Daniel 7, the primary difference being that John writes *after* Christ's *first* coming, victorious death, resurrection, and ascension (v. 5). Verses 1-17 relate: (1) the ongoing warfare on earth (v. 9); (2) the overcoming ability of the redeemed because "the kingdom" has come (v. 10); (3) the two-edged truth that their victories often cost martyrdom (v. 11); and (4) the basis of their triumph: the Cross ("the blood of the Lamb") and the authority of God's Word ("the word of their testimony"—v. 12). Various interpretive systems see this at different times within redemptive history. The mixture of pre-, a-, and postmillennial viewpoints has often fragmented the church, rather than providing a common base of wisdom for each group to receive while embracing one another as we all face a common Adversary (v. 9). Seeing that no complete interpretive scheme will be verified until after Christ comes, our wisdom is to embrace the Cross as our salvation and our source of overcoming victory. Then we can enter the conflict in confidence, knowing we shall triumph even though circumstances temporarily set us back. In the time of conflict, it will make no difference who was "right," but only that we were on the Messiah's side in this agelong spiritual struggle.

The text provides two indisputable facts: (1) the kingdom of God has already established triumph over the Serpent (vv. 9-10) and (2) still, those engaged in conflict in the name of the Lamb sometimes are vanquished to

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death (v. 11). Breadth and balance are given to our perspective. The *presence* of the kingdom at this time calls each believer to responsible spiritual warfare and anticipated victories. Yet, at the same time, the presence of evil struggles for survival; though "cast down," the Serpent writhes viciously. Thus our temporal situation is often a fierce and sometimes painful struggle, seeming to issue in an indeterminate standoff before our Enemy. But he only has "a short time," until finally the kingdom *to come* (v. 10) shall become the kingdom *accomplished* (Revelation 19-22). Let us do battle in faith and with faithfulness and, looking to that day of His ultimate kingdom, know the Holy Spirit is preparing us for kingdom victories *today*. J.W.H.

**KINSMAN-REDEEMER.** There were four specific tasks that the kinsman-redeemer (*go.el*) was to perform as his help was needed: (1) If his kinsman sold his property to pay his debts, the kinsman redeemed or bought back the property (Lev. 25:25; Ruth 4:1-6; Jer. 32:6-15); (2) the person who was captured, enslaved or sold into slavery had every right to expect his kinsman to redeem him and set him free (Lev. 25:47-49); (3) if a person died childless, the redeemer married the dead man's widow and raised up a son to carry on the family line and to honor the deceased person, in a custom known as levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10). There also appears to be a role of a kinsman-redeemer to track down the killer in vengeance. In passages noting that custom, *go.el* is translated as "avenger of blood" (Deut. 19:12).

The term kinsman-redeemer is used of God to express His intimate relationship with His people (Is. 41:14; 43:14; 44:24). He is their "next of kin" who ransoms them from bondage (Is. 43:1-3); He pays the price to set them free. Paul reminded the believers at Corinth that God had bought them at a price; therefore, they were to glorify God (1 Cor. 6:19-20).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Hayford, J. W., Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). [\*Hayford's Bible handbook\*](#). Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; London; Vancouver: Thomas Nelson Publishers.