

## THE REALITY OF THE KINGDOM (1)

*Scripture Reading: Matt. 5:3-12, 13-16, 20-45a, 48*

Matthew 5, 6, and 7 reveal the reality of the kingdom. According to Matthew, the kingdom has three main aspects: the **reality of the kingdom**, the **appearance of the kingdom**, and the **manifestation of the kingdom**. If we are going to understand all the chapters and verses in Matthew regarding the kingdom, we have to see these three main aspects of the kingdom. Some of the verses in Matthew are concerning the reality of the kingdom; others are concerning the appearance of the kingdom; still others are concerning the manifestation of the kingdom in the future.

We must realize that as the **reality of the kingdom** comes into being, the enemy, Satan, will also come in to do some **distracting, frustrating, and damaging work**. This working of the enemy produces the outward appearance of the kingdom. Today these two lines exist together: the reality of the kingdom and the appearance of the kingdom. In Matthew 13 there is the **wheat**, but there are also the **tares**. There is the great tree growing up **out of proportion** and **not according to its kind**, and there is the **leaven** corrupting the **fine flour**. The tares, the great tree, and the leaven constitute the outward appearance of the kingdom.

Eventually, there will be the harvest time, the full coming of the kingdom. That will be the manifestation of the kingdom. Do not consider that it is unnecessary to discern these three aspects concerning the kingdom. If you do not see these three aspects, you cannot understand what Matthew says concerning the kingdom. This is the very reason why many Christians have never been clear concerning the kingdom in Matthew. They simply have never seen the three different aspects of the kingdom. The reality of the kingdom is fully revealed and covered in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. These chapters have been called the Sermon on the Mount. The Lord Jesus called His disciples and brought them to the mountaintop, where He gave them the discourse that is recorded in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. It is not easy to realize and apprehend what is revealed in these three chapters. In the past, these three chapters have not been realized in a full, adequate, and proper way. Although they may have used some of the sentences, phrases, and terms from these chapters, most Christians have not apprehended them in a proper way. These chapters are the revelation of the proper kingdom life, and some of the verses are very deep. If you do not realize the governing principle, it will be difficult for you to apprehend the real meaning of these verses.

The Lord's discourse on the mount is divided into seven sections that reveal seven aspects of the life of the children of the kingdom.

## THE CHARACTER OF THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM

The **character or nature of the kingdom people** is revealed in Matthew 5:1-12. We may also say that this is the element or substance or essence of the children of the kingdom. I prefer to use character because it is not just a matter of essence or element. There is something substantial being expressed. Character means something more than mere nature. It means something of the nature that comes out and is expressed. The character of the children of the kingdom is **under the ruling of the heavens**. It is not under any earthly ruling. It is not under the ruling of the family, of the school, of the police station, or of the law court; nor is it under the ruling of anything else in the community. It is under the ruling of the heavens. The kingdom of the heavens really means the **ruling of the heavens**.

We must realize that from the time man **fell**, he began to be under an **earthly ruling**. After his fall man started to lose God's rule from the heavens. Today all the worldly people, regardless of their status, regardless of their standards, and regardless of whether they are good or bad, are **under a kind of earthly ruling**. They are ruled either by their family, by their school, by their corporation, or by their municipal government. This is the earthly ruling.

But the time came for God to establish His kingdom on the earth. His kingdom is another category of ruling, which belongs to the heavens. Although it is on the earth, its ruling is from the heavens, so it is called the kingdom of the heavens. The ruling on the earth comes from the heavens where God dwells. It is not just the kingdom of God in a general way but the kingdom of the heavens in a specific way. The heavens have come down to rule over the earth. Under this kind of ruling, **we who are the children of the kingdom have a specific nature and character**. Our character, our essence, our element, and our nature with all its expression are altogether different from the people who are under the worldly, earthly ruling. The children of the kingdom have their own unique character and nature.

The character of the kingdom people under the ruling of the heavens is composed mainly of six inward conditions related to their heart and spirit and also to three outward items. Altogether there are nine items. Therefore, the Lord repeated the words blessed are nine times. The six items of the inward condition begin with the **first condition** in the **spirit** and end with the **sixth condition** in the **heart**. This means that if we want to realize the proper kingdom life, we need a **proper spirit and a proper heart**. We need to know our spirit and to know our heart. We need to adjust and to attune both our spirit and our heart.

### Poor in Spirit

The first item of the inward condition is in Matthew 5:3: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.*” **The first basic condition is related to our spirit, which is the very place where God can dwell. Our spirit is the organ within us created by God for us to contact Him, to take Him in, to receive Him, and to contain Him.** Many Christians have missed this first condition. They miss the first organ for the kingdom life—the human spirit. Many Christians have never heard anything concerning the human spirit. This is poor and pitiful! To teach people to contact God without using their spirit is like trying to train people to run without using their feet.

To be **poor in our spirit** means to **empty all the things other than God out of our spirit**. We all have to empty our spirit. Our spirit is only for God. This means that we have to empty out everything else that may be within our spirit. We need to be empty in our spirit for God. Unfortunately, most of us have something other than God filling our spirit. Do not think that your knowledge remains only in your mind. Through your mind, your **knowledge can** enter into your spirit and occupy it. Do not think that your hatred remains only in your heart. The **hatred can** also enter into your spirit and occupy it. Do not think your **human, natural, fleshly love** remains only in your emotion. It too can get into your spirit and occupy it. Then your spirit will be filled up with knowledge, hatred, or love. Once your spirit is filled up, there is no room left for God.

When the kingdom comes, we need to be **empty and poor in our spirit** so that we can take God into us. This, however, does not mean to **have a poor spirit**. Do not **have a poor spirit**, but **be poor in your spirit**. This means to **have nothing in your spirit except God**. When the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and chief priests came to the Lord Jesus, they were all filled up in their spirit with all kinds of junk, which they regarded as treasures. Their traditions, their religion, their rituals, their scriptural knowledge, their forms, and all their old religious Jewish practices had become so much junk filling up their spirit. Furthermore, their concepts and philosophical reasonings were filling up and occupying their spirit. They were completely filled up with all these things. When they came to the Lord Jesus, they **argued with Him because they were not poor in spirit**. Therefore, in the opening word of His discourse on the mountain, the Lord said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.” **If we are poor in our spirit, God can immediately come into us**. We will then be in the kingdom of the heavens. This is the first condition of our inward parts. Our spirit has to be emptied. Do not keep any knowledge, tradition, form, religion, or anything else other than God in your spirit. Let your spirit be emptied of other things, and **be absolutely and fully for God**. This is what we need. Do not allow all the knowledge and the things you received from Christianity to occupy your spirit. They need to be emptied out. They may seem to be quite good, but compared to the Lord Jesus they are dung. In Philippians 3 Paul says that he counted all his previous attainments and knowledge as dung or refuse. He counted all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Let us also be empty and poor in spirit on account of Christ.

### Mourning

If we are **poor in spirit**, surely we will **mourn**. We will feel **sad** and **sorrowful** for the poor situation among God’s people and even for our own condition. The situation among God’s people today is really worthy of mourning. Peter, John, and the other apostles surely needed to mourn because of the poor situation among the Pharisees and Judaizers. For the kingdom life we also need to mourn. We need to **mourn** concerning **ourselves**, our **society**, and **today’s Christianity**. When we look at Christ, we are happy and rejoicing, but when we look at ourselves and others around us, we have to mourn. Sometimes in my room I have been rejoicing with the Lord, but at other times I have been mourning for the fundamental, Pentecostal, and charismatic Christians. By reading the Christian papers you can see that the **situation is pitiful**. If you look at the Lord and the church, it is really wonderful. But outside of the church, in formal Christianity, fundamental Christianity, Pentecostal Christianity, and even charismatic Christianity, it is a poor situation. So we have to mourn. This is the second of the inward conditions.

## Meek

Matthew 5:5 says, “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*” If we are sorrowful and mourning, we will surely be **meek**. We will not be proud but meek. We will be **willing** to suffer and even **happy** to lose something. To be meek not only means to be humble and lowly but also to be willing to suffer and to lose something. If we are willing to suffer and are happy to lose something, we will receive a **reward—the inheritance of the earth**. When the manifestation of the kingdom comes, some will inherit the earth. According to Luke 19, some will inherit ten cities and others five cities. We must be the meek people. We must be poor in spirit, we must mourn for the present situation, and then we must be **meek, humble, lowly, willing** to suffer, and **happy** to lose something.

## Hungry and Thirsty for Righteousness

We should not only seek for righteousness but should be **hungry and thirsty for righteousness**. We must be **anxious and desirous to be right with God and to be right with man according to God**. We must be right, not merely according to man’s regulations and man’s principles, nor according to man’s hopes and expectations, nor according to our own concepts and philosophy, but according to God. **To have righteousness is to be right with God and right with man according to God**. We have to be hungry and thirsty for such a righteousness. This relates to our motives. In our spirit and in our heart, in our inward being, we have to be right with God and right with others according to God.

## Merciful

Matthew 5:7 says, “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.*” To be right or to seek and hunger for righteousness means to be strict with ourselves. But to be **merciful** is to be **lenient toward others**. We may be right with God and right with other people according to God. But perhaps others are not right. Rather, they are very loose. Should we condemn them? No, we must have **mercy upon them**. If we will show mercy toward others, we will receive mercy from God. But if we are strict toward others, God will also be strict with us. **We must learn to be strict with ourselves but kind toward others**. We should never measure others by ourselves as a standard. We should not require others to be according to our standard. If we do this, it means we have no mercy; instead, we are legal. Let us learn to be strict, demanding much of ourselves, but kind toward others without demanding anything. This is what it means to be merciful.

## Pure in Heart

Verse 8 says, “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*” If our heart is **pure, we will see God**. Our motives, intentions, desires, and purposes must come out of a pure heart. To have a pure heart means that **our heart is single, seeking nothing but the Lord Himself**.

These six inward conditions begin with our spirit and end with our heart. This means **we all must learn to attune our spirit and our heart**. We all need to pray, “Lord, adjust me. Grant me a proper spirit and a proper heart. Otherwise, I can never have the proper kingdom life.”

## Making Peace

When we have the **proper inward condition toward the Lord**, something will spontaneously come out as the outward state. The first item which will come out is that of **making peace**. We will be **peacemakers**, and we will be called **sons of God**. This is because the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is the One who makes peace. **He is the real Peacemaker, and we are the sons of God**. If we are those who are poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful toward others, and pure in heart, surely we will be peacemakers. Do you think such a person could fight with others? Surely such a one will be peaceful and also a peacemaker.

## Persecuted for Righteousness

If you exercise to keep yourself right with God and right with others according to God, you will be **persecuted**. Others will not appreciate you, and they will persecute you. You will **suffer for seeking after righteousness**. This is the second outward state of the character of the children of the kingdom.

## Persecuted for Christ

The third outward state is that you will be **persecuted for Christ**. People will **revile** you and say **evil things** about you because of Christ. Paul the apostle suffered from evil reports (2 Cor. 6:8). We also have received some evil reports. Many times people have reviled us, spreading rumors and lies. This is to suffer for Jesus Christ. It may be that because you have turned to the Lord's recovery, some of your relatives and friends have spoken evil concerning you. Even if they know nothing evil about you, they may create some rumors according to their imagination. Then you will have an evil report. The Lord Jesus said that when this happens, **we need to rejoice because our reward in the heavens is great**.

These are the items of the character of the children of the kingdom. They are **poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungry and thirsty for the Lord's righteousness, merciful** toward others, **pure in heart**, always **making peace**, **suffering persecution for the sake of righteousness**, and **suffering persecution for Christ's sake**. This must be our character. We must be this kind of people.

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM UPON THE WORLD

If we have such a character, we will surely **exert an influence** upon the world. The Lord Jesus said that we are the **salt of the earth** and the **light of the world**. The earth is **rotten** and **corrupted**, and the world is **darkened**. Today the earth is corrupted with a spiritual chemistry, so it needs to be salted. **Salt will kill the corruption of the earth**. The Lord will put us into this corrupted compound as the salt to kill the germs and corruption. The world, the human community, is full of darkness. We are here as the **light of the world to enlighten the world and to rule out the darkness**. However, we must have the **proper kind of character** that can constitute us as salt and light. Otherwise, we will be a part of the corrupted earth and the darkened world. We ourselves will be corruption and darkness rather than salt and light. **We believe the Lord is going to make all the local churches full of salt and light**.

## THE LAW OF THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM

After Matthew covers the character and the influence of the children of the kingdom, he covers the law of the children of the kingdom. The children of the kingdom are not under the written law, the law of Moses in the Old Testament, but under the **restriction of the law of life**. We know this because at the end of this section of the Lord's discourse, He said that we are children of the Father. As children, we have the Father's life. In 5:48 the Lord said that we should be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. **The only way for us to be perfect as the Father is perfect is to have the Father's life**. Otherwise, we can never be perfect as the Father is perfect. Most sons are like their fathers because they have their father's life. In this section there is a contrast of comparison between living under the law of Moses and living under the law of life.

### Surpassing Righteousness

The Lord Jesus said that if we would enter into the kingdom, we need to have **the righteousness** that surpasses the righteousness which the Pharisees had by the law of Moses. The law of Moses said that we should not kill people. But the law of the kingdom of the heavens says that we should be reconciled with others. **To be reconciled with others and to be agreeable with others** is higher than not killing. It surpasses not killing.

### Inward Pureness

**Inward pureness** surpasses the law against committing adultery. To commit adultery is something outward, but the **law of life requires an inward pureness**. Moses' law required a person not to commit adultery, but the law of life requires pureness in the heart. The inward standard of life is much higher than the outward standard of Moses. It surpasses the law of Moses.

### Not Swearing

**Not to swear** surpasses not swearing falsely (vv. 33-37). To **swear falsely** is to **neglect** to fulfill what you have promised and sworn to do. It means **not to keep your oath**. Therefore, the Old Testament said not to swear falsely (Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2). This means do not neglect to do what you have said. You must do whatever you have sworn to do. But the **new law of life requires you not to swear at all**. There is no need to swear because there is no need to prove that you are right. If you are right, you are simply right. You have no need to prove it. **If the answer**

is yes, simply say yes; if no, simply say no. There is no need to swear about it. To say more is of the evil one (Matt. 5:37). Not to swear at all is much higher than not swearing falsely.

### **Not Resisting an Evil Person**

The law of life, which says “not to resist him who is evil” (v. 39), surpasses Moses’ law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. According to Moses’ law, if someone breaks out your tooth, you in turn may break out his tooth (Exo. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21). But the law of life says **not to resist** (Matt. 5:39). If someone smites your right cheek, you should turn to him also the left cheek. If someone forces you to walk with him one mile, you should go with him two miles joyfully. If someone takes away your outer garment, you should give him your inner garment. This is much higher than the Old Testament law. It is the surpassing righteousness.

### **Loving Your Enemy**

**Loving your enemy** surely surpasses loving your neighbor. The law of Moses required you to love your neighbor (Lev. 19:18), but the **law of life requires you to love your enemy** (Matt. 5:44). Again, this is much higher and far surpasses the law given by Moses.

Eventually, this section of the Lord’s discourse ends by telling us that as children of the Father **we must be perfect as the Father**. We can have perfection only by the Father’s life. **We can have a surpassing righteousness only because we have a surpassing life within us. Because we have a surpassing life with a surpassing law, we can have a surpassing righteousness.** The people of the kingdom are marvelous people! Their character, their influence, and their righteousness are marvelous! This should be the life of the local churches.

*(The Kingdom, Chapter 32)*