

Chapter 9

WAYS OF THE KINGDOM

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. SERMON ON THE MOUNT

THE BEATITUDES

A HIGHER STANDARD

II. THE PARADOXICAL KINGDOM

A HIGHER WAY

GOD'S WAY

III. ABIDING IN CHRIST

ABIDING IN THE VINE

STAYING CONNECTED

Chapter 9 – WAYS OF THE KINGDOM

As we saw in the chapter on faith, once we have been saved, we are called to “... **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure**” (Philippians 2:12–13). God expects us to walk out the faith that is within us. Salvation is not the finish line. It is the starting line. The life of a Christian is not passive, but active.

Followers of Jesus are called Christians; this literally means “little Christs.” While it is not sufficient to merely know the words of Jesus, this is the starting point to being His disciple. Jesus said that to enter the kingdom of God we must be “born again,” to become a new creation. What will this new creation be like? How will it react? How do we know what He would have us do?

I. SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew chapters 5–7, has been called “The Theology of Jesus” and “The Theology of the kingdom of God.” From the most conservative to the most liberal, theologians agree on the importance of the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus showing the difference of Christianity from other religions. What Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount was not just the outward characteristics of looking godly, but what it means to be godly. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus makes a direct contrast not only with the Pharisees, but our natural desires and the ways of “worldly religious-life.”

THE BEATITUDES

1) As Jesus started His message with “The Beatitudes” (Matthew 5:3–12), did He threaten those gathered with judgment, or promise them a blessing?

The psalmist prophesied that the Messiah would be a “Blesser.” **“Let them curse, but You bless; when they arise, let them be ashamed, but let Your servant rejoice”** (Psalm 109:28, NKJ). Like Jesus, we are commanded to be those who bring blessing to this world. **“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse”** (Romans 12:14).

2) What blessing did Jesus say the poor in spirit would receive? (Matthew 5:3)

The word “poor” here means: “beggar, without resources.” Seeing their desperate need, they are the ones who realize their need for God. They are **humble**. The Bible tells us that humility is critically important to God.

Isaiah 57:15 — **“For this is what the high and lofty One says — He who lives forever, whose name is holy: ‘I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’”**

1 Peter 5:5 — **“Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”**

3) What has God promised to do for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness? (Matthew 5:6)

Our very lives were made to be filled by God. The Bible tells us that when He does not completely fill every aspect of our lives, we become spiritually dehydrated — dry, in need of His infilling, and longing for the only One who can give us living water.

Chapter 9 – WAYS OF THE KINGDOM

Psalm 42:1–2 — “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”

Psalm 63:1 — “O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”

The good news is that when we thirst for God, He comes and satisfies the longing of our souls. “Let them give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for men, for He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things” (Psalms 107:8–9).

4) In Matthew 5:10, what promise is given to those persecuted for righteousness sake?

Notice, this is not being persecuted for being religiously obnoxious, but for righteousness. While the world curses you for living a godly life or sharing your faith, Jesus will bless you.

5) What example from the past does Jesus point to of those who were of the kingdom of God and were persecuted because of it? (Matthew 5:12)

The prophets and other servants of God found in the Hebrews 11 “Hall of Faith” were severely persecuted for their faith. They “... were tortured and refused to be released ... faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword” (Hebrews 11:35–37).

6) What is our attitude suppose to be when we are persecuted? (Matthew 5:12)


7) What table seasoning does Jesus say we are to be like? (Matthew 5:13)

8) What is to be done with tasteless salt? (Matthew 5:13)

Unless we let our lives season this world, they are not fulfilling the purpose God has for us. From a heavenly perspective, our lives are being wasted or thrown away.

9) What are we to be like in this world? (Matthew 5:14)

10) What are we to do with our light? (Matthew 5:16)

 Key Verse: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

11) Did Jesus come to abolish or fulfill the Law and the Prophets? (Matthew 5:17)

12) What happens to those whose righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? (Matthew 5:20)

A HIGHER STANDARD

13) The Old Testament said “**You shall not murder**” (Exodus 20:13). But Jesus tells His followers in Matthew 5:22 that we are subject to judgment even if we are just what?

14) What are we in danger of if we call another “**You fool!**” (Matthew 5:22)

15) Is it more important to give God an offering, or to be reconciled with another believer? (Matthew 5:23–24)

16) Did Jesus tell us to go to other people and make things right even if they are the ones that have the problem? (Matthew 5:23–24)

Yes or No (circle one)

17) In what manner are we instructed to make peace or pay our debts? (Matthew 5:25)

18) How does Matthew 5:28 go along with the Scripture “**For as he thinks in his heart, so is he**” (Proverbs 23:7)?

In these verses Jesus is warning us against the hypocrisy of looking righteous on the outside while our hearts’ desires and thinking are wrong or wicked. Our heart attitudes must be free from being critical, becoming offended, belittling, etc. In the kingdom of God, we are responsible not only for what we do or don’t do, but how we think about others.

19) What does God mean when He says “**If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out!**” (Matthew 5:29)

20) Why do some people call verses 5:38–42 the “raising of the mark,” or “the raising of the bar?”

21) According to Matthew 5:44, how are we to treat those who curse us or hate us?

Chapter 9 – WAYS OF THE KINGDOM

22) What does God think of those who only love and care about those who are like them and similar to them? (Matthew 5:46)

Many believers are just like the tax collectors in the New Testament times. They care for others like themselves, but refuse to care for others who are different. The parable of the Good Samaritan makes it clear that Jesus wants His followers to be those who reach out with hands of caring for others.

23) What is God’s ultimate desire for our lives according to Matthew 5:48?


II. THE PARADOXICAL KINGDOM

A HIGHER WAY

As we read the Bible, it is clear that not only are the ways of the kingdom of God beyond our earthly standards, they are often paradoxical to the ways of man. A “paradox” is something that seems contradictory or wrong, but nevertheless is true. God often does things in ways that are not how we would do them. Quite often He does things in entirely the opposite way from what we would have chosen.

24) Are God’s ways the same as ours according to Isaiah 55:8? Yes or No (circle one)

25) According to Isaiah 55:9, how do God’s ways compare to the ways of man?

 Key Verse: “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9).

An example of God’s paradoxical ways would be the selection of David to be king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1–13). The prophet Samuel and David’s father Jesse were certain that God would choose one of his older brothers. In fact, David was not even brought before the prophet to be evaluated because Jesse was certain that God would select one of his older and taller brothers.

26) In 1 Samuel 16:7 God explained to the prophet Samuel that although man looks at the outward appearance, at what does He look?

Many of the things that God chooses to use are illogical ... the farthest thing from what we would naturally do. This shouldn’t surprise us so much, for God is not natural ... but supernatural. Let us look at some of these paradoxical ways of the kingdom.

GOD’S WAY

27) What does God think of the things that are highly valued by men? (Luke 16:15)

28) In 1 Corinthians 1:27 God says that He chooses the (a) to confound the wise, and the (b) to shame the things that are mighty.

a) _____

b) _____

In the kingdom of God, we find that ...

29) we are strong when we are what? (2 Corinthians 12:10) _____

30) we save our life when we do what? (Luke 9:24) _____

31) we become first and greatest when we become what? (Mark 10:43–44) _____

32) What must we do to have abundance, which the Bible calls having “**good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over**” (Luke 6:38)

III. ABIDING IN CHRIST

Because the ways of the kingdom of God are paradoxical to the thinking of man, we cannot know them perfectly. This is one reason it is critically important for us to make certain we are in constant communion with Jesus.

ABIDING IN THE VINE

As believers we are called to be branches of Jesus Christ, the great Vine. Believers are called to abide in Christ. Jesus tells us that if we do, He will be with us. If we are lost in Him, He will be found in us. This is the great mystery of the Gospel. The person who chooses to dwell with God will find God dwelling in him.

🔑 Key Verse: **“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing”** (John 15:5, NKJV).

33) What are the results of abiding in Christ shown in John 15:5?

34) According to John 15:7, what are the results of abiding in Christ?

35) John 8:31–32 tells us that if we abide in Jesus’ word we (a) and (b) .

a) _____

b) _____

36) According to 1 John 2:28, when Jesus returns we can have confidence and not be ashamed if we do what?

Chapter 9 – WAYS OF THE KINGDOM

How can we know if we are abiding in Him?

37) According to 1 John 4:13, we know that we abide in Jesus because we have what?

38) John 15:10 also tells us that we abide in Christ by doing what?

STAYING CONNECTED

We “abide” with Christ by spending time with Him. A branch must remain constantly connected to the main vine in order to stay alive. While meeting with other believers in church services and home gatherings is good, we must learn to spend time with God on an ongoing daily basis. Behavioral scientists have shown that it is human nature to become like those we spend a lot of time with. This shows us why it is so important to spend time with Jesus, for it is Jesus we want to become like.

Most believers spend time with the Lord by regularly having a “quiet time.” A quiet time is a time set apart for: reading the Bible, spending time in prayer (asking and listening, for prayer is to be a dialogue, not a monologue), and a time of personal worship — singing or proclaiming the goodness of God. These times allow us to build our relationship with God through prayer, praise, and worship; and to sink our roots into the Word of God, which gives us a solid foundation. As Jesus becomes more fully the center of our lives, we will be more fully conformed into the image of Christ and better be able to reach out to other believers and the lost.