

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 4



CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KINGDOM

Scripture Texts: Psalm 47:8; Matthew 5:3; Matthew 18:4; Matthew 13:44-46; Luke 13:18-21; Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17

We have seen that the kingdom of God is a real kingdom containing all parts necessary to a kingdom and that it has been given to the church. What kind of a kingdom is it to which God makes us heirs? As we look into a few of the Scriptures concerning it, we see that Jesus likened it to many things. Who can better describe the kingdom than the King? The kingdom of God is perfect because it is divine, not human.

MEMORY VERSE: *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*
—**John 3:3**

How to Know It

We learned in Lesson 1 that this Child, this Son, is Jesus Christ, called the mighty God, the everlasting Father. The government was placed upon His shoulder. Thus, the first thing we see is that the kingdom is supernatural. It is ruled by the divine Son of God. It will increase endlessly, thus is growing and eternal. Two facts show its eternity—no end to its increase and it is established forever. It is just and right. The kingdom of God is not in word. Words can sound big and prove empty. The subjects of this kingdom will have power over sin, power in prayer, and power to draw the world to Christ (**1 Corinthians 4:20**).

Describing the Kingdom

Matthew 5:3— The kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit—the lowly, humble, contrite. The kingdom is made up of repentant ones. We see too many try to enter the kingdom dry-eyed, confident, self-assured, and unbroken.

Matthew 18:4 — Whosoever . . . shall humble himself as this little child . . . Only childlike ones can enter the kingdom. The child is trusting and obedient, looking to his elders as greater than himself. The childlike, repentant attitude remains with redeemed ones, giving the kingdom a humble and childlike character.

Matthew 13:44-46 —The kingdom of heaven is like . . . treasure and a pearl of great price. The pearl is a symbol of truth. Its value is greater than all else. It is so great and so precious in value that one must trade all that he has for it.

The Kingdom of God, in which salvation puts us, is the treasure of treasures that excels all others. This treasure is hid in a field. The field is the Word of God, and it takes digging into it to find a kingdom experience. It cannot be found by going from shop to shop. One must have the right tools to dig with. The more we dig, the more sure we are that there are more treasures there.

Luke 13:18-21 —The mustard seed was the least of seeds, but the greatest of herbs. Every great work has a small beginning. This seed was taken by a man and sown in his garden, or in his heart. The mustard seed did not denote size of faith, but a living and growing faith. Jesus told His disciples that He was with them, but He wasn't in them yet (**John 14:17**). When this seed, Jesus Christ, is planted in one's heart and begins to grow, it becomes greater each day it is allowed to expand. Christ's kingdom begins in the individual heart at the time Christ moves into him and takes control of his life. This seed will grow and remove things contrary to spiritual growth. No matter how good the seed is, it will not grow in bad ground. The new seed must be planted in a new heart.

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As leaven works slowly and quietly and engulfs the whole lump or loaf, so does the seed of God when applied to the heart of man. The kingdom is a living and growing thing. Hidden in a human heart, it grows to fill and change the life and reaches out to take root in others.

Luke 17:20-21 —The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, is not Jerusalem, Salt Lake City, Washington, or any other place. The kingdom of God is within you, is not to be set up with armies or by leaders taking authority. We cannot say Lo here! Or, lo there!—cannot pinpoint it in a certain locality, as perceptible to our physical senses, cannot be seen nor touched. It is an inside matter of the heart.

Romans 14:17 —It is not meat and drink. It is not an outward or material thing. It is not dependent upon special feasts or ceremonial food and drink, forms, works, dress, keeping of days, buildings, shrines, nor any such thing. It is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost The kingdom is spiritual. Thank God! Isn't that wonderful news? It is the Spirit of God working in the spirit of man, blessing, and enriching it.

The kingdom of God is a kingdom that cannot be moved (**Hebrews 12:28**). It is changeless and indestructible. This is because the changeless and indestructible King made and controls it. Therefore, let us watch that we use His grace to serve God acceptably.

The Power of the Kingdom

Human persuasion is not enough. It is the working of the Holy Spirit through the saints, not independently of them, that draws others into the kingdom. Jesus said that each one must give his all for the treasure, or pearl. We must give up all and forsake it. It is worth it! We receive all from Christ.

JUST A THOUGHT

It is better to fill a little place right than a big place wrong.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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