

LESSON 6

AS A CITIZEN OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden."

(Matthew 5:14)

LESSON 6. AS A CITIZEN OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD CONCEPT OF THE PICTURE

1. **Jesus preaching on the Mount** Jesus Christ came as the King of the kingdom of God.

2. **Jesus positioned in center of the crowd** ... Jesus Christ has absolute authority in the kingdom of God.

3. **8 types of people surrounding Jesus** Citizens of the kingdom of God are distinguished from the rest of the world.
 - (1) **David** Blessed are the poor in spirit.
 - (2) **Job** Blessed are those who mourn.
 - (3) **Moses** Blessed are the meek.
 - (4) **Paul** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.
 - (5) **Good Samaritan** Blessed are the merciful.
 - (6) **Stephen** Blessed are the pure in heart.
 - (7) **Barnabas** Blessed are the peacemakers.
 - (8) **Daniel's 3 friends** Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness.

LESSON 6. AS A CITIZEN OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

People cannot walk enriched lives without a correct self-image. In the previous section, we learned that Christians are spiritual infants, and in this section we will learn that they are citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

As a prerequisite for this section's lesson, focus on the following points:

"Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him," (Matthew 5:1)

- The Sermon on the Mount does not preach salvation by law.
- The Sermon on the Mount was spoken to the disciples.

1. Jesus Christ came as the King of the kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ's first message in life was "repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (Matthew 4:17) The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven have the same meaning. The kingdom of God was the central theme to Jesus' preaching (in this case the kingdom of God is the messianic kingdom, in other words the Millennial Kingdom). The kingdom of God requires these three things:

- (1) Presence of the King
- (2) Authority of the King
- (3) The King's people

Geographic concepts that we commonly associate with a kingdom are not included. Kingdom of God also means God's control within the followers' hearts.

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

2. Jesus Christ has absolute authority in the kingdom of God.

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus often quoted the Old Testament and showed his authority to interpret and heighten it to a spiritual level by following this speech pattern: "You have heard _____. However, I will say to you now_____." Also, he commanded his disciples as follows when leaving this world:of God also means God's control within the followers' hearts.

"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.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)

3. Citizens of the kingdom of God are distinguished from the rest of the world.

God demands the citizens of the kingdom of God to have a different lifestyle, value system, and logic from the ordinary people of the world. Israelites, who are the people of God, were blessed when they began a way of living that was separated from this world, and their demise began when they became one with it.

- Abraham's divine calling (Genesis 12:1-3)
- The experience of the Exodus (Leviticus 18:1-4)
- Shifting of imperial rule (1 Samuel 8:5, 19, 20)
- The sin of idol worship (Ezekiel 20:32)
- Captivity of Israel (2 Kings 17:7-8)

In order to understand the Sermon on the Mount you need to understand background information such as follows. Jesus Christ called the citizens of the kingdom of God the “salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13) and the “light of the earth” (Matthew 5:14), which indicate these three expectations God has of them:

- They are distinguished from the rest.
- Have the characteristic to spread.
- Can give positive influence.

Jesus Christ touched on 8 characteristics possessed by the citizens of the kingdom of God, and called them Blessed People. “Blessed” in this case means:

- Not whether one feels subjective happiness, but is an objective declaration.
- Not what comes after death, but what one experiences in this world.

(1) Blessed are the poor in spirit. (Matthew 5:3)

The poor in spirit are people who can recognize what they need to be, and those who can repent. David is a person with those qualities.

- A soldier of the Lord (1 Samuel 17:47)
- A sinner who received grace (Psalms 32, 51)
- A poet (Psalms 23)

(2) Blessed are those who mourn. (Matthew 5:4)

Christian life is not a bed of roses. Christians will face problems. There are also problems that arise because you are a person of faith. Remember Job at such times—he learned these lessons from his sufferings:

- Do not think that hardships happen as a result of your sins.
- People's words will not help you.
- God gives us enough grace.

(3) Blessed are the meek. (Matthew 5:5)

To be meek is not to be weak, but to have the ability of self-control. Also, it is the ability to objectively criticize oneself. Moses is a perfect example of these qualities.

"Now Moses was a humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth."
(Numbers 12:3)

- 40 years in Egypt (development of personal abilities)
- 40 years in Midian (discovery of powerlessness)
- 40 years of the Exodus (blooming of meekness)

(4) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. (Matthew 5:6)

This means to wish to live righteously in your relationship with others, as well as with God. The first name that comes to mind as someone who sought justice vigorously is Paul.

- Sought the justice of law
- Learned the justice of God
- Martyred for the justice of God

(5) Blessed are the merciful. (Matthew 5:7)

To be merciful is to be considerate towards those who are in need of help. The Good Samaritan is a person who showed his mercy through action (Luke 10:30~37). Mother Teresa, who devoted herself for others in Calcutta, India, is a divine vessel who most eloquently speaks of mercy to modern people.

- Knows he has received mercy
- Sensitive to the needs of their neighbor
- Does not expect favor in return

(6) Blessed are the pure in heart. (Matthew 5:8)

These are people who live without anything to hide—those with pure motives. The first person that springs to mind as someone with this characteristic is Stephen. He is a person controlled by the Holy Spirit.

- Personality has been changed (someone with an angelic face)
- Is filled with power (someone who has refuted their enemy)
- Has seen what can't be seen (someone who saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God)

"But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'"

(Acts 7:55-56)

(7) Blessed are the peacemakers. (Matthew 5:9)

The truth splits people in two, and creates conflict. When one lives by putting God first, one will immediately be attacked by the world. Christians, however, do not create conflict on their own. They are taught to seek peace with all peoples. Barnabas was a peacemaker.

- Person of dedication (Acts 4:36-37)
- Person of consolation (Acts 9:26-30)
- Person of forgiveness (Acts 15:37)

(8) Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness. (Matthew 5:10)

As long as there is a battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world, persecutions will occur. No matter how truthfully Christians lead their lives they will be persecuted for their truth. This is where we remember Daniel's three friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego).

"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'"

(Daniel 3:16-18)

- Prepared for persecution.
- Relied on God for the final judgment.
- Chose to be happy regardless of the outcome.