**More Like the Master**

In His Teaching: The Message

Lesson 16

*“And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues*

*and preaching the gospel of the kingdom…” (Matthew 4:23)*

**Teaching God’s Word**

Jesus taught a message that was not his own but a message that belonged to God and came from God. Jesus said, *“My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me”* (John 7:16) and *“When you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things”* (John 8:28). Jesus gives us a good example of teaching the message that we should be teaching the world today.

One principle theme of Jesus’ teaching was the “kingdom of heaven” (found 30 times in the gospels). Jesus came teaching and preaching *“the gospel of the kingdom”* (Matthew 4:23). During his Galilean ministry, Jesus *“went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God…”* (Luke 8:1-3). He opened his ministry with a discussion of the kingdom (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15) and he closed his ministry with the same. Luke records: *“To whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God”* (Acts 1:3; see also 1:6).

The “kingdom” of Jesus’ teaching was not a physical territory on earth. The “kingdom” was the rule of God in the hearts of mankind (Luke 17:20-21). The “kingdom” is made up of men and women who submit to the rule of God in their hearts. Let us examine how we can be “More Like the Master” by focusing our teaching on the “kingdom of heaven”.

**Jesus: The Message Behind the Teaching**

Jesus taught about the king of the kingdom. God in heaven was a main feature of Jesus’ teaching. Jesus taught that God is a “Father” because God is creator of all and provider of all (Matthew 5:45,48; 6:8,32; 7:11; Mark 11:25; 14:36; Luke 6:36; 12:30,32; John 1:13; 14:3; 16:10; 20:17). Jesus also taught that God is a “King” over his kingdom because he rules with his word and will (Luke 12:32). Jesus referred to the “kingdom of God” 50 times in the gospels.

Jesus taught about the sons of the kingdom. The nature of mankind was another main feature of Jesus’ teaching. God wants men and women to make up the “kingdom of God”. The “sons of the kingdom” (Matthew 8:11-12; 13:38) is a reference primarily to the Jews, and then ultimately to all mankind (Matthew 8:11-12; 21:31,43; Luke 13:28-30). Jesus taught that mankind is born innocent and upright (Matthew 18:1-6). Mankind leaves the state of innocence through sin (Luke 18:13) and needs to repent (Matthew 11:21-22; 12:41; Mark 1:15; Luke 7:37-38; 9:62; 13:1-5; 15:18-21). Mankind needs to undergo conversion (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; John 3:3-5). Mankind is the chief object of God’s love and is offered a plan of salvation from sin (Matthew 6:26; 18:12-13; Luke 15:11-24; John 3:16).

Jesus taught about the character of the kingdom. Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven is spiritual in nature, not physical. Blessings in the kingdom would be spiritual rather than material. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus told his disciples that he would build his church and give them *“the keys of the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 16:18-19). The Lord’s “church” (meaning “called out”) are all the saved people who are also citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Some who stood and heard Jesus teach would still be living when they *“see the kingdom of God come with power”* (Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27). God’s kingdom was “at hand” during Jesus’ ministry (Matthew 10:7; Mark 1:15), but it came fully with power on the day of Pentecost when the Lord’s church was established and the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). The Lord’s kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). The blessings of the kingdom are freedom through truth (John 8:32,36), eternal life (Mark 10:23-26), righteousness (Matthew 5:6,17-20; 6:33), peace (Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31), and forgiveness (Matthew 18:15-35).

Jesus taught about the growth of the kingdom. Jesus taught four specific parables describing the slow, but steady growth of the kingdom: the Seed (Mark 4:26-29), the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30), the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32), and the Leaven (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21).

Jesus taught about priorities in the kingdom. Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven was so important that it must be sought out diligently and given first place. The kingdom is like a hidden treasure and a pearl of great price (Matthew 13:44-46). The kingdom must come first in one’s life (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31). Service in the kingdom must also take precedence over all other relationships and the kingdom must be sought with single-minded interest (Matthew 8:21-22; Luke 9:59-62).

Jesus taught about entry into the kingdom. Jesus taught everyone how they could enter into the kingdom of heaven. A person could accept or reject the kingdom (Mark 10:15). Jesus taught that anyone could enter the kingdom by being “born again” (John 3:3-5). Jesus taught that a person must repent (Mark 1:15; 2:17; Luke 5:32; 13:1-5), believe the gospel (good news) about Jesus (Mark 1:15), change the heart (Matthew 5:8; 6:21; Mark 7:21-22), obey God’s will (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; John 3:36), surrender self (Mark 8:34), confess him (Matthew 10;32-33), set aside riches (Matthew 19:23), and be baptized (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16;15-16; John 3:5).

Jesus taught about citizenship in the kingdom. Jesus taught his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount how they should live as citizens in his kingdom (Matthew 5:1 - 7:29; Luke 6:12-49). He taught them about true happiness (Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-26), influence (Matthew 5:13-16), obedience (Matthew 5:17-20), God’s word vs. human tradition (Matthew 5:21-48; Luke 6:27-36), proper motives (Matthew 6:1-18), proper priorities (Matthew 6:19-34), proper judging (Matthew 7:1-5; Luke 6:37-42), value (Matthew 7:6), seeking (Matthew 7:7-11), proper treatment of others (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31), making right choices (Matthew 7:13-14), bearing proper fruit (Matthew 7:15-23; Luke 6:43-45), and building on the right foundation (Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49). Jesus taught about this kingdom citizenship with authority (Matthew 7:28-29). He also taught that greatness in the kingdom starts with humility (Matthew 18:1-4; 19:14).

Jesus taught about discipleship in the kingdom. Jesus taught many of his followers about discipleship in the kingdom and how their life would not be a life of ease (Matthew 8:18-20; Luke 9:57-58). Discipleship involves putting Jesus first over the affairs of this life (Matthew 8:21-22; Luke 9:59-62) and it also involves trusting Jesus without fear (Matthew 8:23-26; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25). Jesus wanted his disciples not only to come and follow him, but also to go away and publish the good news about God (Mark 5:18-20; Luke 8:38-39). After rebuking Peter for his human wisdom, Jesus taught the multitude that discipleship requires complete, daily self-denial and sacrifice (Matthew 16:24-28; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:22-27). Discipleship is conditioned upon continuing to abide in the words of Christ. Jesus said, *“If you abide in my word, then are you truly my disciples…”* (John 8:31; see also 8:51).

Jesus taught about the future of the kingdom. Jesus taught that one day the present earthly phase of God’s kingdom would end and a new heavenly phase of the kingdom would begin (Matthew 13:37-43). Jesus taught that there would be a future day in which this world would end. He taught about death and the coming judgment day (Matthew 5:7; 6:14-15; 7:21-22; 10:32; 20:1-16; 22:1-14; 25:1-13,31-46; Mark 13:13; Luke 14:16-24; John 5:28-29). He taught about two destinies: heaven and hell (Matthew 7:13-14). He taught about the blessed reward of eternal life in heaven for the righteous (Matthew 5:12; 6:20; 19:21; 25:46; Luke 10:20; 12:33; 18:22). He taught about the terrible fate of eternal punishment in hell for the wicked (Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 25:46).

**The Christian and the Message**

Christians in a local church may teach many subjects from both the Old and New Testaments. They might teach important topical subjects like the church, conversion, the end-times, etc. They might also teach important textual subjects like the books of the Bible. Regardless of what subject is taught, a Christian can always focus the minds of the students on the “kingdom of God”.

We can focus on teaching the lost about the kingdom. Like Philip (Acts 8:12) and Paul (Acts 19:8), we need to be preaching and teaching things *“concerning the kingdom of God”* to the lost. The lost need to hear about God the King and about all the spiritual blessings of the kingdom. Paul preached the kingdom to the lost with all boldness and we need to do the same (Acts 28:23,31). The lost need to hear that the *“unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5). But, they also need to hear that they can be delivered out of the power of darkness and translated *“into the kingdom of the Son of his love”* (Colossians 1:13). There are still souls today, like Joseph of Arimathaea, who are *“looking for the kingdom of God”* (Mark 15:43) and we need to stand ready to teach them about the kingdom.

We can focus on teaching the saved about the kingdom. We need to work like Paul did, *“confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God”* (Acts 14:22; see also Revelation 1:9). Like Paul, we need to be teaching the saved about the kingdom (Acts 20:25). We need to remind the saved what the kingdom is not: *“the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 14:17). We need to remind the saved to stay busy because they are *“fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God”* (Colossians 4:11). We need to encourage the saved to live *“worthy of the kingdom of God”* today (1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5), so that they can be part of that *“heavenly kingdom”* in the future (2 Timothy 4:1,18). We need to teach the saved to add to their faith and grow so that they can gain *“entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 1:11). The saved have the blessed status of being *“a kingdom and priests”* (Revelation 1:6; 5:10).

**More Like the Master in His Message**

Jesus focused his teaching message on the “kingdom of heaven” and the “kingdom of God”. His message was authoritative (Matthew 7:29), revolutionary (John 7:46), applicable (Luke 10:37), appealing (Mark 12:37), demanding (John 8:24), binding (John 12:48), and final (Matthew 24:35). Let us all be “More Like the Master” in focusing our teaching on the great “kingdom of heaven”!

**Questions**

1. What was one principle theme of Jesus’ teaching?

2. What did Jesus teach about the king of the kingdom and the sons of the kingdom?

3. What did Jesus teach about the character and growth of the kingdom?

4. What did Jesus teach about kingdom priorities and entry into the kingdom?

5. What did Jesus teach about citizenship and discipleship in the kingdom?

6. What did Jesus teach about the future phase of God’s kingdom?

7. What can we teach the lost about God’s kingdom?

8. What can we teach the saved about God’s kingdom?