

# Character and Conduct: Kingdom Citizens

## Introduction

In our previous lessons we learned that we grow up in the family of God but that we go to work in the Kingdom of God. We learned that we are to become a functional citizen of the Kingdom, that we are to become producers in the Kingdom economy and not remain just consumers. We learned that the event of salvation, the new birth, begins the process of salvation, our sanctification, which results in us being transformed by the renewing of our mind.

We develop our character as we mature in the family of God. As we come under disciple, we learn how to conduct ourselves appropriately as an Ambassador of Christ. As we go to work in the Kingdom, we exemplify the character and conduct of a son of God.

## Kingdom Function

In what we call the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presented us with the attributes of the character and conduct of a Kingdom Citizen. This is the expected stature of maturity that we are to attain. All Kingdom function comes out of Kingdom character, which is the Word being made flesh in us, conforming us to the character and image of Jesus.

### Matthew 5:3-12 NASB

- (3) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- (4) "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- (5) "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.
- (6) "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- (7) "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
- (8) "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- (9) "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- (10) "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- (11) "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.
- (12) "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We know from the verses prior to this that Jesus had withdrawn from the crowds and had gone up on the side of the mountain (which particular mountain is not recorded). The disciples joined him there

and He began to teach the disciples about the things of the Kingdom of God. He begins with some of the primary aspects of Kingdom character and behavior.

1. poor in spirit
2. mourning
3. gentleness
4. hunger and thirst for righteousness
5. merciful
6. purity of heart
7. peacemakers

Those who operate in these character traits are an affront to those who operate by the standards of the world. This results in Kingdom Citizens being “persecuted for the sake of righteousness”, having “people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you” because of Jesus. This conflict with worldly people comes with the territory and cannot be avoided. If we are becoming conformed to the image of Christ we are becoming a target for persecution, insult, and false accusations from those who walk in the world.

Jesus continues on with the *calling* that comes forth out of our character and behavior.

#### Matthew 5:13-16 NASB

- (13) "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.
- (14) "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;
- (15) nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.
- (16) "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

We are *salt*. We are *light*. That is our calling in God. That is what we are as Kingdom Citizens. For our calling to be effective, we must maintain our saltiness and we must let our light be seen. This makes *what we are* and *what we do* very important to the purposes of God and very agitating to the world.

By being what we are and doing what we do we become hated by the world. Our message, the gospel of the Kingdom, becomes a hostile message to a hostile world. It is an offensive message to any and all of the other so called kingdoms. When they hear that message, they want to fight. Since they can't fight against the Kingdom of God, they will fight against the messenger. If the messenger compromises the message, he is no longer a messenger to the world but rather a confederate with the world. If the messenger will modify the gospel preached so that it becomes inoffensive, the world will love and accept that messenger who will preach a modified gospel.

#### John 15:19 NASB

- (19) "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

The Kingdom of God is the greatest threat to the kingdoms of this world. There is continual conflict, opposition and warfare between the kingdoms. There is no peaceful co-existence possible between them for one nullifies the other. We cannot be citizens of both kingdoms. If we are citizens of the Kingdom of God, the world will hate us. It is not that the world can't love because the world loves it's own, but it hates those who are no longer attached to the world.

### 1 John 3:13 NASB

(13) Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.

The hatred of the world is the normal Christian life and should not surprise us. All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution because the message of the Kingdom of God is a devastating message of condemnation to every other kingdom. It is an uncompromising message of either escape these other kingdoms or be destroyed with them. Flee from the kingdoms of this world or be destroyed with them. Escape from the kingdom of man or be destroyed with it. Escape from the kingdom of darkness or be destroyed with it. Deliverance is only available in the Kingdom of God. There is no possible hope for any other kingdom.

## Kingdom Conduct

After discussing character and calling, Jesus continues the sermon on the mount with a discussion about Kingdom conduct or behavior. Jesus does this with a contrast to the law. He said, “you have heard it said,” and then brings forth one of the commandments of the law, then He says, “but I say to you” and then speaks to the condition of the heart.

The Scriptures make it clear that the Law was unable to change the heart. The Law could only police outward behavior without bring life. Jesus increased the difficulty of obeying the Law by moving it from an outward requirement to an inward change of heart. This can only occur as we yield ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit to change us. We no longer operate in the letter of the Law but we live by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus begins by defining how we are to relate in a Kingdom manner with others, starting with our closest relationships of brother and family. Then, He defines our relationship with our enemies. We cannot function in a Kingdom manner in these relationships unless our hearts have been changed by the Spirit of God and we have begun to mature. For example: it is impossible in the natural to love our enemies. It is beyond the natural man. This can only be accomplished as our hearts have been changed, our minds renewed and we have been empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus moves on in His sermon on the mount by defining how we are to walk in righteousness. He does this by presenting to us the correct application of our spiritual duties of giving, praying and fasting. Then Jesus defines how we are to relate to the world and the things of the world. Kingdom citizens cannot operate in hypocrisy. We are dependent upon the King and His Kingdom. We have to *hear*, *receive*, and *do* the things of the Kingdom and the commands of Jesus. In all of this we are being conformed to the image of an unchanging King and we are becoming partakers of an unchanging Kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:2-4 For further study on this subject see “[Law, Life and Inheritance](#)” available on the website.

## Expectations of the Kingdom

We have somehow gotten the idea that our entrance into the Kingdom of God is automatic—that simply confessing Christ is enough. However, Paul told the disciples that “through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God”.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that the Kingdom was being taken away from them because they were not producing Kingdom fruit.

### Matthew 21:43 NASB

(43) "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.

We participate in the Kingdom of God by qualifying and being counted worthy. The Kingdom is not just assigned to us because we are believers. We receive the Kingdom when we produce the fruit of the Kingdom, when we do the will of God, and when we keep the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, among other things. In other words by *qualifying*. It is in our participation in the Kingdom, now, that we qualify for the Kingdom, then.

### 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NASB

- (9) Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,  
(10) nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

### Galatians 5:19-21 NASB

- (19) Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,  
(20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,  
(21) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

### Ephesians 5:5-6 NASB

- (5) For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.  
(6) Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

All of these things are issues of *character* and *conduct*. If our character and conduct doesn't change we can forget about inheriting the Kingdom.

There is no question that many who consider themselves to be Christian believers will not qualify for the Kingdom of God.

The Lord God is the judge of the whole earth. He will determine who qualifies for participation in the

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 14:22

eternal Kingdom. Now, in this life, we must be transformed into the character of the King and His Kingdom as revealed in Jesus Christ. We must grow up into Jesus. We must lay aside all of those things that will prevent us from inheriting the Kingdom of God.

**2 Corinthians 3:18 NASB**

- (18) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.