

THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE CONTINUED:

THE KINGDOM OF GOD;

MATTHEW: Matt. 25:1-46,

The apostle Matthew's record gives comprehensive accounting about the kingdom of God beginning with John the Baptist preaching repentance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 3:2)

Jesus started His ministry preaching and teachings repentance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 4:17) He recruited 12 men who were known as His disciples and sent them to go and preach to the Israelites the same message; repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (10:5-7) He continued teaching and preaching about the kingdom in Matthew 5:2-3 and concluding in chapter 25:46. In Matthew's account we see a portion of the longest recorded teachings of Jesus which is known as Jesus's sermon on the mount. (Matthew 5-7) In it, He pronounced blessings for those of the kingdom of Heaven. The first is for those who are poor in spirit. This is referring to those individuals who realize how poor they are without the Spirit's guidance. He said the kingdom belongs to them. Why? Because they realize how ineffective they are due to the absence of the Spirit in them. They will humble themselves and seek the kingdom of God. Their number one priority will be to seek the Spirit's guidance in their lives. Later in His message, He told His followers and us to first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything else would be added. (Matthew 6:33)

In verse 10 of chapter 5, Jesus taught that those who are persecuted because of their stand for righteousness are blessed, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, which means that they will be able to enjoy heaven, as reward for their righteous living. They are persecuted now, because of their firm stand for what is right, but they will be rewarded in God's kingdom. Stand

firm, never give up, God will see you through and reward you in the end; it will worth it.

Jesus' message was one of repentance, because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 4:17) In order for one to reap the benefits of the kingdom of heaven, one must forsake sin, ask for God's forgiveness, turn from sin and turn to follow God.

2. When Jesus sent His disciples to go out and preach, He told them to preach the same thing that He preached, which is, that the kingdom of God is at hand. It also means that today we are to preach the same message. If it was important for Jesus and His disciples to preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, then, it is good for us to do likewise. People need to know about the kingdom of God. It was so important to Jesus that people know about the kingdom of God that He taught about the subject using parables. A parable is using one story to illustrate another. Here are some examples, THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER, Matthew 13:1-23, PARABLE OF THE KINGDOM, Matthew 13:24-52. Most people are caught up with the kingdom of this world, but few know about the kingdom of God. Jesus said that we need to choose the kingdom in which we will serve. He stated clearly that we cannot serve both. (Matthew 6:24) In thinking about the kingdom of God; we must recognize that every kingdom has a king. In this case God is the King of His kingdom, He is a loving, kind, merciful and gracious King. He invites whosoever is willing to come into His kingdom, He has also provided the way through which those who are willing may enter. There is only one entrance into His kingdom, which is Jesus Christ. His kingdom is one of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)

3. In Chapter 19:14, Jesus blessed the children that were brought to Him and said that the kingdom of heaven is as such. In chapter 18:3, He said that except you be converted and become like little children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. He did not say we are to be childish, but childlike. We must trust God and His word completely, believe Him and accept that He will

do the things He said He is going to do. Just as a child trust his father and will jump to the father's arm, if the father tells the child to jump. The child will jump, expecting the father to catch him, the child does not think of the danger, but puts its trust and confidence in the father that he will catch him when he jumps. He continued teaching that it takes humility for one to be great in the kingdom of heaven. In addition, those who do not forgive those who trespass against them will not be a part of the kingdom. We could not pay for our sins and God forgave us when we ask Him to forgive us. Any trespass against us is not as great as our trespass against God, and He forgives us when we ask, therefore; we must forgive others as God has forgiven us. (Matthew 18:23-35)

4. In Matthew 20:1-16; He compared those who work in the kingdom of God to those who work for a just home holder who has individuals who are hired by him to work in his vineyard, and he agrees to pay them for their service at the end of the day. Some started working very early in the morning, he kept hiring others at different times throughout the day. At the end of the day, he gathered all together, and he paid each the same amount for his service. The amount he paid was the amount to which they had agreed, thus he was just in meeting his obligations. Those who labor in the kingdom enter into the service at different ages and stages of our lives, some from they were young children, others during their teenage years, yet there are those who entered when they were adults or during their senior citizen years. Those who continue to the end will receive the same reward, which is eternal life with Christ in heaven. This parable teaches us that we are not saved by our good works, but we do good works because we are saved unto good works. The promise to His laborers is eternal life. At the end, He rewards the laborers. The rewards is just and has no relationship to when we started. He will reward the faithful for their faithful service, but we must be grateful that He is just and does as He agreed to do.

5. Jesus has much to say about the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew 22:2-14 He compare the kingdom of heaven to a king who made a marriage for his son. He invited his chosen friends to the wedding, but they refused the invitations. He was persistent, therefore; he sent other servants to invite them, telling them that the king has everything ready for them to attend, however; the invitations were rejected again. Not only did they reject the invitations, but they treated the servants badly. The king commanded the servants to go into the highways and invite as many strangers as they can find, to come to the banquet that the king had prepared for the marriage of his son. The servants went out and invited all they saw, both bad and good. Among those who attended was a man who did not accept the garment that the king provided for all the guests. The king asked the man why he was not wearing the wedding garment. He had no answer. The king was angry with him and commanded that he be bound and taken away and be cast out into utter darkness. Then He said many are called but few are chosen. (A) This parable is about the gospel message. The friends who were invited to the marriage supper are the Jews, God's chosen people. The gospel came to them first, they were to be the ones to lead all people to God, but they refused the invitations. God sent several messages to them through the prophets, however they rejected them, some were treated badly. He sent His Son, not only was He rejected by them, but they saw to it that He was killed. (B) God has prepared the marriage supper for His Son and His bride, the church. (C) He has given the command to us His servants, to Go into all the world and invite all to the marriage supper. (D) There are those who are among the invited guest, who refuse to wear the wedding garment of righteousness. (Phil. 3:9; 1 Peter 2:24) (E) When the King returns, they will have no answer why they were not clothed in righteousness. (F) He will command them to be cast into utter darkness for all eternity. That is permanent separation from God. The Bible teaches that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. (1John 1:4-5) (G) He

ended the parable by saying many are called but few are chosen. The call goes out to too many, but the few who are chosen are the few who chose to wear the wedding garment that has been provided by the King. The King is just, He has given man the will to choose. Only those who chose to put on the wedding garment will be included in the bridal party and enter into the banquet with the King and His Son.

6. Matthew 25:1-34; In this section, Matthew recorded two parables of the kingdom of heaven and one statement of judgment. (1) The parable of the 10 virgins. Those virgins represented those who were waiting for the Bridegroom to appear. All waited and were tired, then they rested. While they rested during the night, the Bridegroom came and of the ten virgins only the five who were ready, went in with the Bridegroom, who shut the door behind Him. This parable tells us that not all who claim to be part of the kingdom of God are ready to be with Jesus when He returns. All may look the same, they are waiting, going to church, serving in ministry and doing all the right things but lack the one thing that will make them ready to enter in with the Bridegroom. Each follower of Jesus Christ has the responsibility to live a holy and righteous life. Those are the ones who allow the Holy Spirit to guide them and live by the Spirit and not the flesh. The five foolish virgins represent those who claim to be Christians but live their lives by the world's standard and live according to the desires of the flesh. The sad thing in this passage is, it is a representation of those who today claim to be Christians. The warning is to repent, or you will be shut out from entering into the marriage supper of the Lamb. There will be a midnight cry, when the Lord sounds the trumpet. Are you ready to enter in with Him when He comes? The five foolish virgins were not ready, when they knocked, the Bridegroom said, depart I know you not. It is sad that that will be the answer to many who are playing church today. Some are caught up with religion, others keep making excuses that they are trying to get close to

God. Today is the day of Salvation, the door may be closed tomorrow, don't wait, repent and live a holy life today. (2) The second parable is that of the talents. God is the good Man who went to the far country and gave talents to us His servants. He will return one day soon. Those of us who were good stewards of what God has given us will be rewarded based on the results from our use of the talents we received from God. Those who made good use of the talents which is evident in the increase, will be rewarded with more. Those who did nothing with their talent, will be considered wicked and lazy. God will take what He had given them and give it to the ones who were most productive with their talent. (3) The third is a statement of the judgment at the end of this present age, when Christ returns. It states that there are two groups of people on earth. Those who follow Christ and are compassionate in meeting the needs of those with whom they come in contact and those who have no compassion for them, they simply ignore their needs. He said the compassionate ones who served others were in reality serving Him. Those will be invited to spend eternity in the kingdom of heaven with Christ. The other group will be dismissed from God's presence for eternity. The good news is the opportunity is available for those who in in the goat category, to repent and be included with the sheep. All three parables in Matthew 25 show that not all who claim to be followers of Christ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, only the true followers whose walk match their claim as followers will enter the kingdom. God is loving and merciful. It is not His wish that any should perish, but that all should have eternal life. Don't wait, accept His gift and allow the Holy Spirit to help you live a holy life.

7. The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are used interchangeably throughout the Bible. Matthew uses the term the kingdom of heaven, while all other writers use the kingdom of God. When Jesus taught that is difficult for those who are rich to enter the kingdom, He used both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 19:23-24) This is what it says.

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.²⁴ And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” As we continue our studies of the apostles’ doctrines, we will see what the other apostles taught about the kingdom of God. In doing so, we will include passages from the Old Testament, bearing in mind that the Old Testament was the Scripture that the apostles had, because the New Testament was not yet written. In fact, they were eyewitnesses to what is written in the New Testament.