

The Church of the Servant King
Home Bible Study
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Matthew
(Lesson SB-MT7)
Matthew Chapter 7
Kingdom Values (Continued)

Matthew chapter 7 is the last of three chapters that cover Jesus' teaching to His disciples in what is known commonly as the Sermon on the Mount. We have seen in previous lessons that Jesus is teaching His disciples kingdom values and principles. We have also seen that in addition to the fact that certain similarities to Church Age values and principles exist, there are also differences that must be appreciated by the discerning student of God's Word. While the Church Age believer will be a co-regent with Christ during the Messianic, Millennial reign, thus a participant in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, there is no such kingdom present today. The fact that we will participate in the Kingdom has led some to conclude that the Church is part of a mystery form of the kingdom to which these principles apply. However, I cannot accept such a position because it creates more problems than it solves since the distinctions that exist between kingdom teaching and Church Age teaching can only lead to contradiction and confusion under such an approach. Others have acknowledged the same issues and we will see them in time.

Do Not Judge (7:1-6)

We must remember that in these verses, Jesus is teaching His disciples. The verb *krinw* (*krino*) has a wide range of meanings, e.g. judge in a judicial sense, condemn, or discern. The context does not warrant an application to the law courts since Jesus is not teaching about judicial proceedings. Yet, Jesus is not forbidding them to practice of any kind of judgment at all. Such an interpretation would create a foolish naivete to be practiced by the disciples.

The moral distinctions included in this Sermon require that decisive judgments be made by the disciples. For instance, Jesus teaches that they can remove a "speck" from their brother's eye, but only after they have removed the beam from their own eye. Furthermore, Jesus commands them in verse 6 to distinguish between dogs and swine and to beware of false prophets in verse 15. Such activities require that judgment (discernment) be exercised.

Instead of teaching that the disciples should never judge, Jesus was teaching that they should judge righteously (see John 7:24). Such a principle is certainly consistent with Paul's teaching to the Church Age believer found in such passages as 1 Corinthians 5:3-5; Galatians 1:8-9; and Philippians 3:2 as well as other passages such as 1 John 4:1 where the believer is exhorted to exercise discernment. Furthermore, without such an understanding of the believer's responsibility to judge righteously, contradictions between the passages just cited and Romans 14:10-13 and James 4:11-12 inevitably arise.

The principle: Be discerning without arrogance or presumptuousness. Be discerning with an attitude of humility recognizing your own position before the Lord.

Focus on Verse 6: To what did Jesus refer when He said "do not give what is holy?" What was holy? Answer: that which has been holy in Matthew is the gospel of the kingdom. So this instruction forbids proclaiming the gospel to certain persons designated as dogs and pigs. Instead of trampling the gospel under foot, everything must be sold in pursuit of it (13:45-46). Verse 6 is not a directive against evangelizing the Gentiles or unbelievers. Rather, it is a reference to those who have given clear evidence of rejecting the gospel with vicious scorn and a hardened heart, i.e. those who are blatant enemies of the gospel. An example of this type of rejection from an enemy of the gospel was Herod Antipas, who heard John gladly, but then beheaded him.

Later, when Christ stood before Herod, he said nothing. Jesus later repeated similar teaching to the disciples in 10:14 and 15:14. We find a similar principle in Proverbs 9:8 – "Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you."

The same principle holds true for the Church Age believer as found in such passages as Acts 13:44-51; 18:5-6; 28:17-28; Titus 3:10-11. The difference is that the truth that is rejected is not the gospel of the kingdom, it is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Keep Asking, Seeking, Knocking (7:7-12)

The Sermon on the Mount sets forth the righteousness, sincerity, humility, purity, and love which would characterize the lives and attitudes of those who were ready to enter the Kingdom. Jesus assures His disciples that such characteristics would be theirs if pursued with prayer. The sermon started with a blessing pronounced upon those who acknowledged that they did not have the means within themselves to enter the kingdom (5:3). Then Jesus provided the model prayer in 6:9-13. Now Jesus uses the present tense for “ask,” “seek,” and “knock” to stress the persistence and sincerity required. The emphasis is upon the continual action required.

In context, the disciples would have most likely understood this instruction as related to seeking the righteousness of the kingdom (6:33). Also, if the disciples were intently focused upon insuring that they were each measuring up to the standards required by God, several things would result. First, they would be poor in spirit (5:3) for they would realize how short they fell compared to God’s standard. Second, they would be focused upon removing the plank from their own eye before looking at the speck in their brother’s eye. Finally, they would treat others graciously (7:12).

The Narrow Way (7:13-14)

The Sermon on the Mount ends with four warnings. Each offers a set of paired contrasts, i.e. two ways (vv. 13-14), two trees (vv. 15-20), two claims (vv. 21-23), and two builders (vv. 24-27). The focus is upon the judgment that will be meted out before entry into the Kingdom of Heaven (i.e. the Millennium) will occur.

In these two verses (vv. 13-14), Jesus is teaching His disciples that the way of discipleship is narrow or restricting because it is the way of persecution and opposition. This is a major theme in Matthew (e.g. 5:10-12, 44; 10:16-39; 11:11-12; 24:4-13). The narrow road leads to life in the kingdom (vv. 21-23) whereas the broad road leads to destruction (25:24, 46). Similar principles are taught to the Church Age believer in relation to life after death as well as suffering in this life in Philippians 3:19, 1 Timothy 6:9-10, and Hebrews 10:39. The difference is that the immediate potential of the Kingdom is not present to the Church Age believer as it was when Jesus taught His disciples.

You Will Know Them By Their Fruits (7:15-20)

Based upon the way in which history has transpired (i.e. the rejection of Jesus by Israel at His First Advent), believers during the Tribulation will find particular relevance to this instruction (cf. 24:11). Note that those who will be known by their fruits are the false teachers. There is no statement as such in reference to believers, i.e. we can know believers by their fruits. Such a statement is as inaccurate as generalizing that an unbeliever can be known by his/her fruits. Certainly, false teachers exist during the Church Age and that fact is recognized in such passages as 1 Timothy 6:4-5 and 2 Timothy 2:14-19.

Two Claims (7:21-23)

In this pericope, Jesus continues His teaching regarding false teachers and claimants to the right to enter the kingdom. “That day” in verse 22 is the day of judgment associated with the 2nd Advent of Christ. Jesus will have more to say about “that day” in 25:31-46. Such a day was the focus of some prophetic teaching in such passages as Malachi 4:1-3. The Church Age is not exempt from false teachers (see 2 Timothy 3:5).

Two Builders (7:24-27)

The storm to which Jesus refers in His metaphor is eschatological and a reference to “that Day.” See Isaiah 28:16-17 and Ezekiel 13:10-13 for similar phraseology. The wise man is the disciple of humility who incorporates Jesus teaching into practice and thereby prepares himself for entry into the Kingdom. Unlike the religious leaders of Jesus’ day, Jesus taught based upon His Own authority and not the authority of others. Jesus is the One Who grants admission into the Kingdom.