

# JMBC

2021 Theme

“Kingdom Citizens Striving to Advance the Kingdom of God on Earth as it is in Heaven”

Matthew 6:10

## ADVANCING GOD'S KINGDOM

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**Understanding the Kingdom of God  
Through the Parables of Jesus**

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**Week of June 28– July 4, 2021**

# **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

## **JULY EMPHASIS: UNDERSTANDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD THROUGH THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens should strive to understand that Jesus taught principles of the Kingdom during his earthly ministry, and they should strive to learn, understand, and embrace all He taught.

**WORDS:** Parable, Sowing, Separating, Sacrificing

### **LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN: SOWING GOOD SEED**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Is it easy for you to learn from a parable in the Bible?
2. Do you have a solid and grounded relationship with God?
3. Has the Word of God ever caused you to sacrifice your desire?

#### **TEXT: MATTHEW 13:3-9**

### **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF SOWING AND REAPING.**

**INTRODUCTION:** Today, we will begin a series of lessons that Jesus teaches with parables. A parable is a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels. This week's lesson is a parable told by Jesus of a sower. This is the first time in Matthew's Gospel that Jesus taught in parables. Jesus knew this was an effective way to teach and engage His followers in the ministry. This is a powerful writing and presentation of the Gospel. When we take a look at this Gospel of Matthew, it is evident that the writer quotes Jesus much in this book and therefore presents a strong argument concerning the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. In fact the major theme of this book is "The King and the Kingdom." This Gospel is probably listed first because of the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. However, some scholars would say that Mark was the first Gospel written and is one source of the other synoptic Gospels. The book of Matthew places great emphasis on the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ; also this Gospel has the largest blocks of discourse material. When we move into our text for this week in this thirteenth chapter of Matthew, we find the first of seven parables in this chapter. Jesus told about a farmer who sowed seed in his field. The emphasis in the story is on the results of the sowing, for the seed fell on four kinds of soil: **Along the path (Matt. 13:4), on rocky places (V 5), among thorns (V 7), and on good soil (V 8).**

### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THROUGH PARABLES THAT IN SOWING SEED THEY WILL GET DIFFERENT RESULTS. (VV 4-5)**

In this parable, Jesus compares the Word of God to seeds that are sowed on the ground for harvest. A parable compares something familiar to something unfamiliar. It helps us understand spiritual truth by using every day objects and relationships. Parables compel listeners to discover truth, while at the same time concealing the truth from those too lazy or too stubborn to see it. As we consider this parable Jesus uses in chapter thirteen and verses four and five: ***“As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.”*** (Matt. 13 4-5) This parable uses the sower, the seed, and the ground to help us understand how the Word of God is planted in our lives and the results that are manifested on our reception and application of the Word. The first lesson this text teaches us is the fact that the seed was sowed, and it was sowed on the ground that had been hard packed or simply hard ground. The spiritual implication to this fact is that we must be careful that our hearts and minds are not hardened when the Word of God is planted in our lives. One other spiritual implication is that sometimes when the Word is sowed in our lives, our hearts and minds are hardened. Because of this, we can waiver or be overtaken by some strange doctrine. We must be steadfast unmovable, always abounding in the Word of God, and the truth of the Gospel.

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THROUGH PARABLES THAT WHEN GOOD SEED IS PLANTED, THEY MUST NOT WAIVER OR LOSE HEART. (VV 6-7)**

As this parable continues, we find that Jesus says: ***“the soil was shallow;”*** you see seed must be planted in good soil and have depth so it can be rooted well. Also, in our lives when the Word of God is sowed, it must be rooted in our hearts and mind. Then the text says: ***“But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.”*** (V 8) The spiritual implication to this verse is that when the heat and pressures of life come upon us we must not get overheated and burned under these conditions and fade, waiver, give up, nor stop relying on God. We must have our hearts, mind, and soul grounded and rooted in the Word of God. Then the text says: ***“Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.”*** (V 7) The spiritual implication to this verse is that when situations and circumstances of life come up in our lives, we can't choke or get discouraged. We must press our way through trusting and believing in the Word of God.

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THROUGH PARABLES THAT WHEN GOOD SEED IS PLANTED IN GOOD SOIL, IT PRODUCES GOOD HARVEST. (VV 8-9)**

The text says: ***“Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop-a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”*** (V 8) This verse is self explanatory because the seed that's sowed in good soil produced good harvest. When the truth of the Gospel and Word of God is planted in our lives, we will reap a good harvest. ***“He who has ears, let him hear”*** (V 9) The Word of God!

**Week of July 5– July 11, 2021**

## **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

### **JULY EMPHASIS: UNDERSTANDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD THROUGH THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens should strive to understand that Jesus taught principles of the Kingdom during his earthly ministry, and they should strive to learn, understand, and embrace all He taught.

**WORDS:** Parable, Sowing, Separating, Sacrificing

### **LESSON TWENTY-EIGHT: GOD DOES THE SEPARATING**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. How do you feel about people interfering and destroying your plans?
2. How did you react when you found out that an enemy messed you up?
3. What type of reaction do you have when you can't separate the good from the bad?

### **TEXT: MATTHEW 13:24-30**

### **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT AT TIMES THEY MUST WAIT ON GOD TO DO THE SEPARATION.**

**INTRODUCTION:** This month as we continue to learn and understand Kingdom principles through parables, we must learn more about parables. To add to last week's lesson about parables, we should note that the word "parable" comes from two Greek words (para and ballò) which together mean "to throw alongside." A parable, like an illustration, makes a comparison between a known truth and an unknown truth; it throws them alongside each other. Jesus is a master at using this method of teaching and engaging people to understand biblical principles and truths through this method. The parable Jesus uses in this week's lesson is called "The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds." Some versions may call it "The Wheat and the Tares." Either way, this parable along with the other parables in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter contains some of Jesus' simplest but most profound parables in the Bible. In this second parable, Jesus again used the figure of the sower but with a different twist. After a farmer sowed his wheat seed, an enemy came at night and sowed weeds on the same soil. As a result, the wheat and the weeds grew together and would continue to do so until the time of harvest, for removing the weeds early would result in destroying the wheat. **(VV 28-29)** Therefore, they must grow together until the harvest when the weeds would first be gathered out and destroyed. Then the wheat would be gathered into the barn. Again, Jesus uses the art and function of farming to give spiritual insight and understanding on the principle of allowing the good and the bad to grow together, and God do the separation.

### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THROUGH PARABLES THAT AT TIMES SATAN WILL USE PEOPLE OR THINGS TO DISMANTLE OUR PROGRESS. (VV 24-25)**

There are times when it is difficult to distinguish true believers from those who are acting the part but are not genuine. This second parable of the wheat and the tares points us in the same direction of the first parable and sets forth the Kingdom in those two aspects. The wheat depicts true believers; the tares are mere professors. The text says: ***“Jesus told them another parable: “The Kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.” (VV 24-25)*** Unger says that “the most common tare found in grainfields in the Holy Land is bearded darnel, a poisonous grass, almost indistinguishable from wheat while the two are growing into blade.” But when they come into ear, they can be separated without difficulty. The spiritual lesson Jesus teaches us here is that sometimes when we can’t tell what or who is real or fake, we must stay true to God and His word and let God do the separation. Truth will always prevail, and what is done in the dark will come to the light. Even when the adversary plots and plans against you in the dark or while you’re sleeping, God knows and will work it out in the end. We must hold fast to the truth of Romans 8:28 ***“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”*** Our job is to love God, remain faithful, trust God, and know He is working it all out for our good!

### **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THROUGH PARABLES THAT GOD WILL HAVE SERVANTS ON YOUR SIDE AND BE READY TO DEAL WITH SATAN. (VV 27-28)**

The text shows us here that when the servants saw the tares mixed in with the grain, they asked the owner how this happened. It appears that they were ready to step in and handle the situation of Satan. But because the owner had insight from God and knew what they were dealing with, he encouraged them to wait on God. We can learn some valuable lessons from these verses. The text says: ***“The owner’s servants came to him and said, “sir didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?” (V 27)*** One spiritual lesson we can learn from this verse is that there will always be someone who recognizes the good we do and is ready to aid us. Also, we must be aware of where the enemy or opposition is coming from. The next verse says: ***“An enemy did this, he replied. The servants asked him “Do you want us to go and pull them up?” (V 28)*** The two powerful implications here are that the owner realized where the problem came from, and we must realize the same. Then one other spiritual insight is the servants were ready to do something. We must be ready to do something but know when or not to react.

### **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THROUGH PARABLES THAT GOD KNOWS THE RIGHT TIME TO REACT, AND WE MUST WAIT ON GOD. (VV 29-30)**

In verses 29-30, the owner tells the servants not to pull the weeds because they may root up the wheat. It is the same in our lives; we must not remove some things right away because we may ruin the good that may be attached even though it may be hurtful. Another spiritual insight is that when we wait on God, the harvest will be plenty and prosperous!

**Week of July 12– July 18, 2021**

# **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

## **JULY EMPHASIS: UNDERSTANDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD THROUGH THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens should strive to understand that Jesus taught principles of the Kingdom during his earthly ministry, and they should strive to learn, understand, and embrace all He taught.

**WORDS:** Parable, Sowing, Separating, Sacrificing

## **LESSON TWENTY-NINE: IT IS WORTH THE SACRIFICE**

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Have you ever put something away for safe keeping and forgot where you put it?
2. How much of what you have will you invest to get what you want?
3. How do you feel about giving up all you have for a promise?

**TEXT: MATTHEW 13: 44-46**

## **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS RECOGNIZE TREASURES OF THE KINGDOM EVEN WHEN THEY SEEM TO BE HIDDEN OR NOT OF VALUE.**

**INTRODUCTION:** Thus far in our introductions, we've considered just a few points about the Gospels and parables. As we continue to study this Gospel of Matthew and learn from these parables, we shall look at or overview a little more about the Gospels. Not only is the Gospel a unique literary category, but after the four Gospel writers wrote the Gospels, the canonical mold was broken. This canonical mold was the process that was used to place these writings into what we know as the Bible. The four Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have been recognized by orthodox Christians for nearly two thousand years. Various heretics wrote books they called Gospels, but they were shabby, untruthful vehicles that were not anointed by God to promote some heresy, such as Gnosticism. Now, as we move into this Gospel of Matthew and into the parable, we are studying this week, we must not forget the main purpose for Matthew's Gospel. That is to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the eternal King. These two parables have identical meanings. Both picture salvation as something hidden from most people but so valuable that people who have it revealed to them are willing to give up all they have to possess it. The kingdom of Heaven is more valuable than anything else we can have, and a person must be willing to give up everything to obtain it. The problem with some people, and even Kingdom Citizens, is that they want to hold on to all of their earthly possessions and receive all God's Kingdom treasures on Earth at the same time. The man who discovered the treasure in the field stumbled upon it by accident but knew its value when he found it.

The merchant was earnestly searching for the pearl of great value, and when he found it, he sold everything he had to purchase it. This is a powerful parable we must learn from so we can know the value and significance of Kingdom Living and Salvation.

### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF MAINTAINING KINGDOM TREASURES EVEN WHEN THEY ARE STUMBLED UPON. (V 44)**

This is Jesus teaching through the parable of Hidden Treasure. In this parable of the treasure, Jesus compares the Kingdom to treasure hidden in a field. A man finds it, covers it up, and then gladly sells all he has and buys that field. Let's consider the parable as applied to a sinner giving up all he or she has in order to obtain Christ, the greatest treasure. Even though this interpretation violated the doctrine of grace which insists that salvation is without price. However, the free gift of salvation does cost us to give up our lives that we may gain our lives. The Bible says: ***"He who finds his life will lose it and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."*** (NKJV) This is not to say that we pay or earn our salvation because we could never do that. However, we must be willing to surrender our lives to Christ who purchased it with His own blood. The text says: ***"The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."*** (V 44) We can glean several lessons from this verse. The lesson teaches us that when we find the hidden treasure of salvation for our souls, we should share it. Also, when we find the treasure of Kingdom living and salvation for our souls, we should be willing to give everything we have, are, and hope to be for the cause of Christ.

### **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THAT WE MUST APPLY EFFORT IN FINDING KINGDOM JEWELS OF INSIGHT AND VALUE. (V 45)**

Jesus continues to teach Kingdom principles through this parable. To some it appears that this is another parable; this is kind of a continuation of the same parable using another example to get His point across. However, even if we consider this to be another parable, the lesson is still important and valuable for Kingdom Living. The text says: ***"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls."*** (V 45) Jesus points out here that the merchant is the one who goes and searches for the pearl. The pearl of great value may represent the church or believer, the bride of Jesus Christ. Cook says: "Pearls are uniquely formed. Their formation occurs because of an irritation in the tender side of an oyster. In a sense, the church was formed out of the wounds of Christ and has been made possible by His death and sacrifice." Truly, we are like those pearls, and Jesus is the merchant who finds us in our tender places, and we at times are the merchants who must be in search for the pearls that are in Jesus Christ.

### **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THROUGH PARABLES THAT IT TAKES SACRIFICE IN ORDER VALUE AND POSSESS KINGDOM LIVING. (V 46)**

The text says: ***"When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."*** (V 46) It took faith and sacrifice for this merchant to look for the treasure of great value and to give up everything he had to obtain the treasure. One spiritual lesson this verse offers is when the believer is in search for anything of great value, he or she must look with intention and expectancy to find the treasure, especially Kingdom treasure. Then, he or she must be willing to sacrifice self and possession to obtain it.

**Week of July 19– July 25, 2021**

# **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

**JULY EMPHASIS: UNDERSTANDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD THROUGH  
THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens should strive to understand that Jesus taught principles of the Kingdom during his earthly ministry, and they should strive to learn, understand, and embrace all He taught.

**WORDS:** Parable, Sowing, Separating, Sacrificing

**LESSON THIRTY: AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR SALVATION**

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. How do you handle being in a crowd of people with all kinds of lifestyles?
2. How do you picture Heaven and the people that occupy the Kingdom?
3. Why do you think the task of Angels doing the separation in Heaven is so hard?

**TEXT: MATTHEW 13:47-50**

**THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT LIFE ON  
EARTH IS TEMPORARY, AND IN THE END, GOD DOES THE SEPARATION!**

**INTRODUCTION:** As we conclude these series of lessons by Jesus through parables, we should reflect on the introductions given from the beginning of the month until now. We have only skimmed the surface of introductions thus far in the gospel of Matthew. Therefore, as we continue in this Gospel, it would be wise for us to study even more on the introduction and to review what we have had so far. This is another powerful parable for God's people to learn Kingdom lessons from. This parable of the fishing net has the same meaning as the parable of the wheat and weeds. We are to obey God and tell others about his grace and goodness, but we cannot dictate who is part of the kingdom of heaven and who is not. The sorting or separation will be done at the last judgment by those who God has chosen and are infinitely more qualified than we are. This is Jesus' seventh parable, and it compares the Kingdom of heaven to a net that was let down into the lake so that a great catch of fish was hauled in. The fisherman pulled in a full net of fish to shore, and sorted out the fish, collecting the good ones in baskets and throwing the bad ones away. Jesus pointed out that this sorting represents the angelic separation of the wicked from the righteous at the end of the age. We must keep in mind that Jesus is using this parable for our enlightenment on the kingdom of heaven, the end of the age, or the second advent of Christ. These are important events for Kingdom Citizens to get understanding of as we journey towards everlasting life. These events Jesus is teaching in this parable seem to be linked with the tribulation period. However, as believers we must know and understand how to live in this present age because we may transition from this life before the end of the world or the tribulation period. Therefore, let's look into this parable for



lessons for better understanding for life everlasting principles.

### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN THROUGH PARABLES THAT JESUS USES. (V 47)**

Jesus opens this parable of what some call “The Parable of the Net” and compares it to the Kingdom of heaven. The fact that Jesus says: “once again” lets us know that He has taught this principle before through a parable. Of course, we know this also because we have studied the parable of “The wheat and tare” already this month. However, this time Jesus uses fish and the net to teach us another Kingdom principle of the Kingdom of heaven as well as a principle of living and understanding how to live in this age. The text says: ***“Once again, the Kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish.” (V 47)*** This verse teaches us several valuable lessons for understanding God’s principles of unifying and separating His people. One of the biblical principles this text teaches us is that in God’s united scheme of life, all kinds of people are together caught in God’s net of life. We don’t have the right or the authority to decide who comes in or gets thrown out. The text implies that the net was just let down, and all kinds of fish got caught. We can liken this idea to God’s Kingdom of heaven and conclude that we don’t decide who goes into heaven or not; only God does. Therefore, we are to join God’s net of Kingdom living, encourage others to do so, and live lives that represent God and His grace and goodness.

### **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THAT THROUGH PARABLES GOD’S ROLE FROM THEIR ROLE IN KINGDOM ASSIGNMENTS. (VV 48-49)**

When we consider this parable a little further, we are able to understand our role as Kingdom Citizens from God’s role as the king of the citizens. The text says: ***“When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore.”*** This verse implies that the fishermen did a good job of pulling in the catch and understood that this was a fruitful and faithful task that they completed. However, they took on a responsibility that was not theirs when it came to the biblical understanding of this parable. When we consider the biblical principle of this parable as it relates to the Kingdom of heaven, the separation of the fish was not their responsibility. The text says: ***“Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.”*** The question here is whose responsibility it was to do the separation? When we consider this next verse, the answer to this question is apparent. The text says: ***“This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous.” (V 49)***

### **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THROUGH PARABLES THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING SEPARATED FROM GOD. (V 50)**

This parable concludes with the proclamation and consequences of being separated from God and ending up in the fiery furnace. The text says: ***“And throw them into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*** Of course, Kingdom Citizens understand that this verse is talking about heaven and hell. The consequence of ending up separated from God is eternal suffering and weeping. However, Kingdom Citizens who abide in Christ and accept His gift of salvation will spend eternity with God.

**Week of July 26– August 1, 2021**

# **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

## **AUGUST EMPHASIS: A BLUEPRINT FOR KINGDOM RESTORATION- LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens must seek guidance and protection from the enemy during the Kingdom restoration process. They know that God has given them a blueprint for re-establishing the Kingdom and that He will stand with them until the job is done.

**WORDS:** Rebuild, Prepare, Protect, Praise

### **LESSON THIRTY-ONE: SEEKING GOD'S GUIDANCE FOR WHAT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Do you consult God first, before setting goals for your life?
2. How do you determine the preparations necessary to achieve your goals?
3. How do you respond to people who do not want you to succeed?

**TEXT: NEHEMIAH 2:4-13**

### **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT WE SERVE A GOD WHO WILL PROVIDE A BLUEPRINT FOR US TO ADVANCE HIS KINGDOM.**

**INTRODUCTION:** After studying some of the parables of Jesus last month, we begin the month of August by turning our attention to properly planning for Kingdom advancement. All our studies for this month are from the Old Testament Book of Nehemiah. We are introduced to Nehemiah as a Jewish exile serving in the Persian royal court as the personal cupbearer to the king. This prestigious position reveals his upright character. Some Jews who visited Jerusalem (in Judah) returned to Persia and reported to Nehemiah that those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire. The lack of fortified walls around the city left the people weak and defenseless against enemies. Nehemiah becomes desperate to return to his native land to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and advance the Kingdom of God, but he needs a solid plan to do so. He starts out by getting the support of the king. This month we will examine some aspects of Nehemiah's blueprint for success and examine how we can use some of his examples in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of God today.

#### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD KNOW THAT THEY MUST SEEK GOD'S APPROVAL AND GUIDANCE FIRST. (VV 4-6)**

*"The king said to me, "What is it you want?" (V 4)* The first thing Nehemiah does before he answers the King is to pray to God. He is seeking God's guidance and God's

approval of the mission **BEFORE** he seeks man's approval. He needs to know that God approves of what he is about to do, and he wants God's guidance on making the proper preparations to achieve the goal. *"Then I prayed to the God of heaven and I answered the king, 'If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.'"* (VV 4-5) The lesson for Kingdom Citizens is clear: To properly advance the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven, we must seek God's approval and guidance. As human beings we sometimes come up with good ideas with good intentions, but sadly, we do not consult God first. When our plans fail, we run to God and ask him why we failed when we should have consulted Him in the beginning. **Our blueprint must begin with God.**

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD KNOW THAT WHEN GOD BLESSES THE GOAL, THEY MUST MAKE ADEQUATE PREPARATION TO ACHIEVE IT.** (VV 7-9)

The next thing Nehemiah does is make adequate preparation by securing letters from the king for safe passage through the kingdom. *"I also said to him, 'If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah?'"* (V 7) He knows that he must have the king's authority to move freely on his journey to Jerusalem. Nehemiah knew this would not be an easy task. He next asks for necessary materials to make the final project a success, *"And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?"* The king's response is positive, but God is given the glory!! *"And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests."* (V 8) The king had also sent army officers and cavalry for his protection. Nehemiah knew that God had provided him a blueprint for success. Adequate preparation is necessary for Kingdom work.

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD ANTICIPATE AND RECOGNIZE THOSE WHO DO NOT WANT THEM OR THEIR PLANS TO SUCCEED.** (VV 10-13)

Nehemiah also knew that there would be some haters out there who would not want him to succeed. Upon his arrival to Jerusalem, two such haters are identified, *"When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites."* (V 10) It really does not matter how honorable your goal or how good your intentions, there are people who hate to see you succeed. Kingdom Citizens know that when God has given his approval, they must make preparation to face the doubters, the detractors, and the other haters who will stand in the way. Nehemiah did not wither in the face of opposition. First, he made sure that everyone didn't know the particulars of what he was going to do, *"I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem."* (V 11) They knew he was going to build the wall, but they did not know how. It is never good to tell your enemies all your plans!! He continued to work his plan by surveying the ruins of the city under cover of darkness, *"By night I went... examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire."* (V 13)

**Week of August 2– August 8, 2021**

## **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

### **AUGUST EMPHASIS: A BLUEPRINT FOR KINGDOM RESTORATION- LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens must seek guidance and protection from the enemy during the Kingdom restoration process. They know that God has given them a blueprint for re-establishing the Kingdom and that He will stand with them until the job is done.

**WORDS:** Rebuild, Prepare, Protect, Praise

### **LESSON THIRTY-TWO: SEEKING GOD'S PROTECTION WHEN THE ENEMY COMES**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Have you ever been in a situation where someone has ridiculed you?
2. What spiritual walls do you have that need to be rebuilt?
3. How do you react when someone “talks badly” about the Kingdom of God?

#### **TEXT: NEHEMIAH 4:1-6**

### **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE TACTICS OF THE ENEMY AND BE PREPARED TO COUNTER THEM WITH GOD'S PROTECTION.**

**INTRODUCTION:** In our last lesson, we were introduced to Nehemiah and how he received the sanction of God and the approval of the king to return to Jerusalem with the task of rebuilding the city walls and advancing the Kingdom in his home land. Upon his arrival, he was immediately met with opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah, and several of the surrounding people. These folk saw the rebuilding of the walls a threat to their power and influence. Nehemiah did not allow the opposition to deter him from the task. In this lesson, we will see some of the tactics the enemy uses to challenge God's plan. As we examine Nehemiah's blueprint for success and as we examine our own, we must be prepared for the opposition that will come in many forms. Whenever God's people try to get right and do right, the enemy appears to challenge them in many ways. What can we glean from this as we continue our task of advancing the Kingdom of God today?

### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST ANTICIPATE THAT THE ENEMY WILL TRY TO MAKE US LOSE OUR FOCUS FROM DOING GOD'S WILL. (VV 1-3)**

The destruction of Jerusalem's walls had left its people exposed to great trouble and shame. Rebuilding the walls was important because it revealed God's blessing, served as a sign to Israel's enemies, and showed that God was with His people. The walls

would provide protection and dignity, sending a clear message to those who wanted to keep Israel down. ***“When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble-burned as they are?” (VV 1-2)*** Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, ***“What they are building-even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!” (V 3)*** The enemy’s first tactic was to discourage through ridicule, derision, or rejection. Kingdom Citizens know that we, like Nehemiah, have an enemy who opposes us with craftiness and power. Against every effort on our part to get our lives together and recover from damage, hurt, and ruin, we will experience opposition from the enemy. A part of our blueprint is to anticipate it, plan for it, and not be hit by a surprise attack! The Kingdom must be advanced!!

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS TALK TO GOD AND SEEK HIS GUIDANCE ON HOW TO DEAL WITH VERBAL ATTACKS. (VV 4-5)**

Nehemiah regards this attack as an insult against God Himself. Yet, he knew that they were just words. He does not argue back, nor does he retaliate. He does not lose focus by being drawn into a verbal confrontation where he has to match them word for word. He simply responds by praying. It was prayer that guided him from the beginning and there was no need to stop now. ***“Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.” (VV 4-5)*** It reminds us of Peter's words about Jesus: ***“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats.” (1 Peter 2:23)*** This is a helpful picture of how to handle verbal attacks. Many of us struggle every day because our spiritual walls have crumbled. The enemy tries to hold us down and is loathe to say a kind word. We must accept that there will always be folk who delight in seeing us in a weakened condition and will do anything to keep us that way. Our response should be to stay in touch with God. Don’t lose focus.

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT THREATS AND INSULTS ARE NOT ENOUGH TO STOP THEIR SUCCESS IN DOING GOD’S WILL. (V 6)**

Nehemiah knew that it was necessary to keep the people motivated to complete the task. In other words, he knew that the people must have a mind to work. An important part of his blueprint for success was to guide and properly focus the mindset of the people by encouraging them to remain steadfast. ***“So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.” (V 6)*** The attempted distraction of mere words uttered by the enemy was not enough to stop them, nor should it be enough to stop you. **Many modern day Sanballats and Tobiahs are out there. We must seek God’s protection when they try to ridicule and discourage us.**

**Week of August 9– August 15, 2021**

## **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

### **AUGUST EMPHASIS: A BLUEPRINT FOR KINGDOM RESTORATION- LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens must seek guidance and protection from the enemy during the Kingdom restoration process. They know that God has given them a blueprint for re-establishing the Kingdom and that He will stand with them until the job is done.

**WORDS:** Rebuild, Prepare, Protect, Praise

### **LESSON THIRTY-THREE: SEEKING TO PREPARE ADEQUATELY IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. What are some ways that the church is being attacked today?
2. Do you hesitate to collaborate with others to defend yourself from spiritual attacks?
3. Do you find it difficult to stay focused on God when the enemy attacks your work?

### **TEXT: NEHEMIAH 4:12-18**

### **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST WORK TO- GETHER IN A SPIRIT OF UNITY WHEN THE ENEMY SHIFTS TACTICS TO STOP THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM.**

**INTRODUCTION:** In last week's lesson, we saw the enemy attempting to discourage the work of God's people by using verbal threats of ridicule and intimidation. It did not work. The building of the walls continued full force. Did that deter the enemy? No, it did not. In today's lesson, we find that our enemies never cease their attempts to stop God's work. When one tactic fails, they simply devise another. In our lesson today, the enemies of Nehemiah step up their campaign to stop the rebuilding of the wall. They plan to move beyond verbal threats to physical attack. Will the people of God be deterred by threats of physical force? What do you do when the enemy steps up its game? Nehemiah provides an answer.

### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST SOUND THE ALERT THAT THE ENEMY IS COMING ARMED FOR PHYSICAL ATTACK. (V 12)**

The word that a physical assault was coming spread quickly throughout the land. Supporters of Nehemiah, fearing for the safety of the movement to advance the Kingdom sounded the alarm, "*Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us."* (V 12) They found themselves at a

moment of decision. Do they stop the work and prepare for battle (and risk defeat), or do they pack up and run in the face of a real physical threat? In today's world, it is no different. In the last ten years we have seen a rise in physical attacks against God's people. The murder of nine persons at Mother Emmanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, S.C. is just one of many examples. Churches are being burned and people are being attacked simply because they profess to love God. It seems that every day, Kingdom Citizens find themselves at the same point of decision. What shall we do? Should we deviate from the plan by meeting violence with more violence?

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST COLLABORATE WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH GOD TO SEND A CLEAR SIGNAL OF THEIR UNITY TO THE ENEMY.** (VV 14-15)

Nehemiah responds by doing an assessment of where they were at that time. He looked things over and rallied the people, again reminding them that they were not alone because the Lord was on their side, *"After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the LORD, who is great and awesome."* (V 14) Their very future was at stake; therefore they must *"fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."* Today, we must remember that the enemy does not want just us, he wants our families too. Collaborating in a spirit of unity with each other and with the Lord is more powerful than any threat the enemy can bring, *"When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work."* (V 15) Kingdom Citizens should know that **we need each other to stand in unity with God against those who would try to physically and spiritually attack us and the Church.** Spiritual force is mightier than physical force. No need to retaliate word for word, blow for blow, or shot for shot. In this case the enemy was defeated before the first shot was fired!! **Ain't God good??**

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST BE READY TO ADJUST THE PLAN AS NECESSARY TO COUNTER A CHANGE IN THE ENEMY'S TACTICS.** (VV 16-18)

Nehemiah was not deterred. He knew he was doing the Lord's work and that the work of God cannot stop, even in the face of a real physical threat. It was therefore necessary to present a bold and united front to the enemy. As the enemy shifts tactics, God's people must also shift tactics. He immediately tells the people that they must be soldiers as well as builders. They must collaborate to use their strengths and talents in a spirit of unity. The people heard him and accepted the plan. *"From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor...Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked."* (VV 16-18) By following Nehemiah's God inspired plan, the people sent a powerful message to their would be attackers: We are ready for you! Nehemiah was ever alert and ever watchful, always ready to sound the alarm. *"But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me."* It was their own zeal, diligence, and unity that they accepted that they could hope, under the blessing of God, to encircle Jerusalem with a wall!

**Week of August 16– August 22, 2021**

## **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

### **AUGUST EMPHASIS: A BLUEPRINT FOR KINGDOM RESTORATION— LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens must seek guidance and protection from the enemy during the Kingdom restoration process. They know that God has given them a blueprint for re-establishing the Kingdom and that He will stand with them until the job is done.

**WORDS:** Rebuild, Prepare, Protect, Praise

### **LESSON THIRTY-FOUR: SEEKING TO REMAIN STEADFAST IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Have you ever been personally attacked because you stood up for God?
2. Do you tend to give up easily when faced with a challenging situation?
3. How much credit do you give God when you have won a great victory?

**TEXT: NEHEMIAH 6:1-6; 15-16**

### **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT IF GOD APPROVES THE PLAN, AND THEY WORK HARD TO ACHIEVE IT, VICTORY IS GUARANTEED.**

**INTRODUCTION:** The enemy is in a tough spot now. They have tried using verbal threats and intimidation to stop the building of the wall, but it has not worked. Next, they tried the threat of physical force, and that also did not work. In the meantime, the people of God have been steadily working to complete the task. They stuck to the blueprint that God established at the beginning. For the enemies of Nehemiah and the workers of God, this was a “now-or-never” time. If the enemy doesn’t do something immediately to stop the work, the walls will be completely finished. For the people of God this will be a crowning moment—it is time to finish the job. **How many of you have started a task but did not finish the job?** Is it because you deviated from the blueprint?

### **1. KINGDOM LEADERS KNOW THAT THE ENEMY WILL ATTACK THEM WITH DECEIT, SCHEMES, AND LIES TO STOP THEM FROM DOING GOD’S WORK. (VV 1-6)**

Now, we see the final tactic of the enemy to stop God’s program. The wall is mostly completed with just a few more things to finish. The word is out that God’s agenda is succeeding. So disturbed are the enemies that they desperately try one more tactic—They attack the leader. Nehemiah himself is now the target. **MINISTRY LEADERS TODAY SHOULD BE ON EVER-ALERT!** Says Nehemiah, “*When word came to*



*Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates— Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.”* Nehemiah knew that it was a set-up to get him alone and then kill him. *“But they were scheming to harm me; So I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?” (VV 3-4) “Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.” (V 4)* Nehemiah remains steadfast in the face of multiple attempts by the enemy to get him to come down from the wall. Next Sanballat sends a letter accusing Nehemiah of inciting an insurrection against the government and offering to meet to discuss it. That didn’t work. Nehemiah replies, *“Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.”* Nehemiah does what he has always done, and what Kingdom leaders today should do; he does not deviate from the blueprint. He prays for God’s strength.

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT THEY MUST COMPLETE THE TASK TO EARN THE VICTORY. (VV 15-16)**

Nehemiah’s success comes in a mighty way. *“So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. (V 15)* In an amazing span of fifty-two days and in the midst of one attack after another, along with wave, after wave of trials, the walls around God’s holy city were completed. Not only did Nehemiah and the Israelites finish the work in record time, the day they completed the work was on the 25th of Elul, which happened to be the Day of Atonement for the Jewish people. This ought to give us great hope and encouragement as we see how God had enabled Nehemiah and his people to finish this task in such a short period of time. God is not just in the business of giving us things to do---He's also in the business of helping us and enabling us so that we can finish the tasks. Kingdom Citizens are encouraged to think of all the things you're trying to do for the Lord to advance the Kingdom, establishing a "**project in process**" list and be encouraged that God can help us, not just to start things but to finish them.

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT EVEN AFTER GOD GIVES THE VICTORY, THE ENEMY STILL LURKS. (V 16)**

Clearly, the hand of God was all over the project. Completion of the task is a great testimony to the power of God and to what can be accomplished when God's people set their minds to work. Many more people start well, then don’t end well because many never endeavor to work diligently enough to complete the task. Completing a task for God sends a powerful message to the enemy, *“When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.” (V 16)* Yet, we should also recognize that the enemy is always lurking and looking for an opportunity to attack our success. We must be diligent in our efforts to advance the Kingdom, celebrating our victories but realizing that new challenges from the enemy are subject to come at any time.

**Week of August 23– August 29, 2021**

## **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

### **AUGUST EMPHASIS: A BLUEPRINT FOR KINGDOM RESTORATION- LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens must seek guidance and protection from the enemy during the Kingdom restoration process. They know that God has given them a blueprint for re-establishing the Kingdom and that He will stand with them until the job is done.

**WORDS:** Rebuild, Prepare, Protect, Praise

### **LESSON THIRTY-FIVE: CELEBRATING GOD'S GREAT VICTORY**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. How do you celebrate a great spiritual victory?
2. How often do you feel the need to re-dedicate yourself to God?
3. Do you find the time to pause and thank God when He has given you a victory?

#### **TEXT: NEHEMIAH 12:27-31**

### **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT AFTER THE VICTORY, THEY MUST CELEBRATE WITH THANKSGIVING AND RE-DEDICATION.**

**INTRODUCTION:** In this lesson we conclude our studies from the book of Nehemiah. In our last lesson, we saw how God allowed the people to complete the task by finishing the wall. For many people this would complete the process, but not so with Nehemiah. The blue print for advancing the Kingdom must include praise and proper celebration after the victory has been won. After completing the wall, Nehemiah led the people in a celebration of Thanksgiving to God for what He had done. Notice, Nehemiah never gives himself credit. It is God who gets the glory. In our final lesson we see that the celebration has begun, and the people are dedicating the wall **and themselves** to the Lord. The choirs, the instrumentalists, the singers, the religious and civic leaders are all gathered for the celebration. Throughout the entire process, Nehemiah exhibited humility and faith as he led God's people. Now he directs a proper celebration.

### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT CELEBRATING GOD'S GREAT VICTORIES REQUIRE A PERSONAL RE-DEDICATION. (VV. 27-29)**

The first thing we learn from this passage is that the people were not only celebrating, but they were dedicating. Nehemiah makes it clear that this is a **joyful** dedication. *“At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres.” (V 27)* The Levites

(religious leaders) were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully. **“Musicians also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem” (V 28)** One of the primary elements of true celebration is the expression of joy. A general attitude of joy ought to characterize all Kingdom Citizens. Joy is not the same as happiness. These people were happy, but they were also joyful. Happiness is liking the present moment because it pleases us. We are enjoying the moment; and therefore, we feel happy. But joy is much deeper and more long-range. **Joy appreciates the past, the present, and the future, not because the circumstances are pleasing, but because the heart is right with God.** The people were happy because the wall was finished. They had achieved their objective. But they were joyful because God had helped them to finish it.

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT TO PROPERLY CELEBRATE GOD’S GREAT VICTORY, THEY MUST PURIFY THEMSELVES. (V 30)**

**“When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.” (V 30)** Many people seem to be afraid of this word, purity. They think it describes a goody-goody two-shoes, self-righteous kind of person. But purification in the Christian life stems from the same philosophy that motivates us when we wash dishes. You do not set your table with dirty dishes. No, we wash dishes frequently because they ought to be clean. We do not want to serve our guests with dirty dishes. And God does not do his work with dirty vessels! We need a periodic cleansing of our lives and hearts. This is what is manifested here. The priests and the Levites had to purify themselves, and they purified the walls, the gates, and the people because they were participating in something related to God.

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT TO PROPERLY CELEBRATE GOD’S GREAT VICTORY, THEY MUST GIVE THANKS. (V 31)**

**“I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks.” (V 31)** Thankfulness is always part of true celebration. The people were thankful. They had a lot to be thankful for: They must have been grateful for the godly leadership of Nehemiah. They were thankful for God's moving of the king of Persia's heart that permitted this whole project to come into being. They were grateful for God’s protection as the wall was being rebuilt. They were grateful for the wisdom of God that allowed them to overcome their enemies, for the spirit of unity and cooperation that prevailed, for strength to labor, and for the supply of food and shelter. Most of all, they were thankful for the will to work. **THEY HAD STUCK TO THE BLUE-PRINT** which enabled the project to be carried through to completion. **Do we give thanks every day to God for the blessings we are enjoying at the moment?** These two choirs marched in different directions around the wall, circumventing the city, and joined together again on the eastern side before the Temple. The celebration fittingly ends at the place of worship. **TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!**

**Week of August 30– September 5, 2021**

## **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

### **SEPTEMBER EMPHASIS: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens know that they should not turn a blind eye to injustice in the administration of government. They know that they must be a servant to others by working against government sanctioned inequality.

**WORDS:** Government, Unjust Laws, Civil Disobedience, Inequality

### **LESSON THIRTY-SIX: A SERVANT'S ATTITUDE IS REQUIRED**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Do you feel that Kingdom Citizens should be involved in politics? Why or why not?
2. Is a political candidate's religious involvement important to consider when assessing whether to vote for him/her?
3. What questions do you ask when assessing whether a political leader has a servant's attitude?

**TEXT: MARK 10:42-45**

### **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST DEMAND THAT PERSONS ELECTED TO POWER IN CIVIL GOVERNMENT HAVE A SERVANT'S ATTITUDE.**

**INTRODUCTION:** Welcome to the month of September. This month we will be examining how the truth of God's Word applies to persons in position of political power and those in church leadership. We begin by examining the need for government leaders to have a servant's attitude with a scripture found in Mark Chapter 10. The relationship of the church with civil authority has been an area of great challenge to Kingdom Citizens. Our nation was built on a principle of separation of church and state, but can we really be totally separate? There is often conflict between the dictates of government and the principles of the church. Laws made by the government have an impact, good or bad, on the church as a body and on the members who are also civil citizens. In Jesus' time the power of government rested in two places: Civil authority with the Romans and religious authority with the church leaders of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Even though we have a different government structure today, Kingdom Citizens find themselves still grappling with who they should elect to political positions and how the truth of God's Word should be applied to political leaders.

### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT JESUS TAUGHT THAT LEADERS IN THE KINGDOM SHOULD NOT TAKE ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEADERS IN THE WORLD. (v. 42-43)**

Throughout the Gospel, Jesus focused on healing and delivering others. He did not seek

his own honor; his acts of healing were a part of him being a servant to others. Jesus spent time with the disabled and moral and social outcasts. He never sought to make a pact or alliance with the government to achieve his goals. His focus was on the human condition. He is not seen making a special appeal to those considered the most powerful in his day to back his cause. He even confronted the scribes and Pharisees, who were more concerned about their stringent interpretations of Scripture more than they were concerned about human conditions. Often, the Jerusalem elite flaunted their power and looked down on the poor. **Is that still happening today?** They did not want to give up power, or even share it, and they were content looking away, rather than addressing the plight of people who Jesus referred to as the **“least of these.”** Jesus taught the disciples that leadership in His kingdom requires humility and the willingness to submit to God **(Mark 8:34–38)** and serve others **(Mark 9:35)**. He warns his disciples not to vie for position and authority like worldly leaders, comparing such attitudes to those of the Gentile Caesars and kings whose rule over the Jews is characterized by injustice and violence. ***“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles LORD it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.” (V 43)*** Kingdom leaders must be different from the leaders of the world.

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT JESUS TAUGHT THAT THE BEST LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR THE KINGDOM IS BASED ON BEING A SERVANT TO ALL. (VV 43-44)**

The disciples expected Jesus to establish an independent Jewish nation. Instead, He establishes the church, which exists under, but independent of secular civil leadership. Jesus doesn't deny the Twelve's desire for leadership positions in His kingdom. He just redefines what "leadership" looks like. ***“Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.” (VV 43-44)*** Leaders in the kingdom of God are to be eager, willing shepherds of God's flock who do not lord over their charges **(1 Peter 5:2–3)**. They must be moral, gentle, and respected by non-Christians. They must be faithful to their wives and good leaders in their families **(1 Timothy 3:2–7)**. All this is in stark contrast to the Romans who threatened their subjects with crucifixion, placed unregulated tax collectors over them, divorced and remarried at will, and killed their own family members to maintain power. **Do you think our political and church leaders today have a servant's attitude?**

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT JESUS TAUGHT THAT THEY ARE EMPOWERED TO INFLUENCE LEADERS OF THE WORLD TO RULE WITH COMPASSION. (V. 45)**

God establishes civil rulers to enforce order and justice. Kingdom Citizens are to submit to civil authority. Yet, a part of effective ministry is knowing when and how to speak truth to those in power. We are to follow the example of Jesus who came to serve, not those secular leaders who serve just enough to accumulate money and power for themselves. ***“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (V 45)*** This kingdom attitude should serve as a catalyst for influencing persons in politics to rule with compassion, considering the plight of the poor and needy.

**Week of September 6– September 12, 2021**

## **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

**SEPTEMBER EMPHASIS: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens know that they should not turn a blind eye to injustice in the administration of government. They know that they must be a servant to others by working against government sanctioned inequality.

**WORDS:** Government, Unjust Laws, Civil Disobedience, Inequality

**LESSON THIRTY-SEVEN: WARNING AGAINST MAKING UNJUST LAWS**

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Have you ever felt that a law was passed that discriminated against you?
2. Do you feel that politicians pass laws to keep themselves in power?
3. In what ways have you challenged a law that you felt was unjust?

**TEXT: ISAIAH 10:1-4**

**THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THEY MUST NOT IGNORE INJUSTICE IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF GOVERNMENT. THEY MUST ACTIVELY OPPOSE UNJUST LAWS.**

**INTRODUCTION:** Throughout our nation's history, laws have been passed that favor those in power but often did not address the human condition. Many of these laws supported inequality, discrimination, injustice, and sexism. Oftentimes it was the less fortunate in society that were ignored or subjugated under these laws because it was the rich, the well-off, and the power mongers who passed them. Many times the Bible was used to justify these unjust laws. This has led to government sanctioned inequality. **Is this of God?** Where was the church while all of this was going on and where is the church today? We learned from our last lesson that Kingdom Citizens should demand that political leaders have a servant's heart and rule with a servant's attitude. They must rule justly. But what happens when political leaders pass unjust laws? How should we, as Kingdom Citizens, react? In today's lesson, we continue our study on Kingdom Citizens and politics by examining the situation that existed during the time of the Prophet Isaiah. The prophet issues a dire warning to those in power because they have passed unjust laws and are administering unfair justice.

**1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER MEANS TAKING A STANCE AGAINST UNJUST LAWS THAT EXPLOIT THE HUMAN CONDITION. (VV 1-2)**

Isaiah Chapter 10 is a continuation of dire warnings and pronouncements of judgment

that began in the previous chapter. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had devolved into a society of favoritism; the rich were favored over the poor, the haves were favored over the have nots, the ones society were to protect (the widows and the orphans) were being ignored, all in violation of God's ordinances. Laws were being passed to keep things that way. Even the judges were making rulings based on favoritism and not impartiality. The government and the courts were failing the people. **Does this sound like what is happening in our country today?** God's anger at all of Israel's pride and wickedness was approaching the flash point. The Prophet issues a dire warning to those in power, *“Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.”* (VV 1-2) God was not happy then, and many believe that God is not happy now with the unjust laws that are being passed today.

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST WARN WORLDLY LEADERS THAT IN GOD'S DAY OF RECKONING, THEY WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR PASSING UNJUST LAWS.** (V 3)

This judgment is against the central government and the judiciary, against those who made and administered the laws. The prophet pleads for fairness and impartiality, that the feelings and rights of all be considered in the process. He makes it clear that God was not happy with the unfair administration of government and that the politicians and judges were about to face a harsh judgment themselves. Unfortunately for many, having a political position is looked upon as a means to power. It is often exploited to keep the power and to get even more power at the expense of the ones government was meant to protect. Isaiah goes on to let them know that God knows the motivation for their actions was for personal gain. Kingdom Citizens must always ask themselves this question, **“What is the real motivation for my service?”** What principles drive the person who seeks to represent me in government or on the judge's bench? Is it about me or is it about God? He asks them a pointed question that we should be asking our politicians today, *“What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches?”* (V 3)

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW THAT GOD'S MIGHTY HAND IS RAISED UP AGAINST THOSE WHO ENACT UNJUST LAWS.** (V 4)

If there was ever a time for those in power to seek the Lord and His thought, it is today. Kingdom Citizens need to get on their knees and into their Bibles and then on their feet to win souls for Christ and teach that they have a responsibility to oppose man's laws that go against God's plan. They must not hesitate to engage in peaceful protest, to organize to put Kingdom minded persons in office, and to openly declare for the poor and the needy. The message to those who enact unjust laws is this, *“Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.”* (V 4) If God is to bless our nation, repentance is in order. No person or party will save us, but they can destroy us, unless we are in godly obedience in our choices. **God's mighty hand is still upraised. We must be careful!!!**

**Week of September 13– September 19, 2021**

## **KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

### **SEPTEMBER EMPHASIS: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens know that they should not turn a blind eye to injustice in the administration of government. They know that they must be a servant to others by working against government sanctioned inequality.

**WORDS:** Government, Unjust Laws, Civil Disobedience, Inequality

### **LESSON THIRTY-EIGHT: RULING RIGHTEOUSLY**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Do you feel that politicians are only concerned with meeting the needs of a select few?
2. What does it mean to you for politicians and church leaders to rule righteously?
3. What are some positive results of leaders ruling with grace and in the fear of God?

#### **TEXT: II SAMUEL 23:1-4**

### **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM LEADERS IN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CHURCH MUST STRIVE TO RULE RIGHTEOUSLY FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL.**

**INTRODUCTION:** We continue our lessons on “**Speaking Truth to Power**” with a word to those in leadership positions, both in the world and in the church. As Kingdom Citizens we pray that God will keep our leaders on the right path as they continue to serve. For those of us who lead in ministerial or other positions, who have a group of persons under our leadership, it is important to remember what God is looking for in us as leaders. In whatever position God places us, we must serve with righteousness and the fear of God. It is interesting that the Bible sometimes permits us to listen in on the death-bed words of a dying saint. We hear Jacob blessing his sons. We hear Moses blessing the twelve tribes. We are interested in hearing the seven last sayings of Jesus from the Cross. In our lesson today, from II Samuel 23, we are privileged to join the surviving members of King David’s family at his bedside. The man who, under God, was responsible to shepherd his people beyond the transition between *‘the days when judges judged’* (**Ruth 1:1**) to the establishment of an enduring kingdom, has a good word for all of us who occupy positions of authority in government and in the church. **Are you satisfied with the leadership of your government, your church or your ministry? If not, why not?** Is it about the quality of the leadership? David provides wise instructions for all of us.

### **1. KINGDOM LEADERS MUST KNOW THAT THEY ARE RAISED ON HIGH BECAUSE OF THE GRACE OF GOD. (V 1)**



First, David said that these words are *“the oracle of David, the son of Jesse”* (V 23) David identifies himself as *“the son of Jesse.”* David was identifying his humble origin. The Hebrew word for “oracle” means **“declaration,”** and it is a statement that is emphatic and clear. David’s point is that his statement is a declaration that comes from God himself. He knew that the only way he could have risen to the position of King of Israel was because of God. David did not say that he achieved the high office of king because of his own ability or personality or skill. He said that he *“was raised on high.”* In other words, something was done to David. It was God who raised David on high. If David was anything more, it was not to his own credit, but to the glory of the One who had raised him up on high. **How much better off would our nation, our state or our community be if the leaders would truly understand that they are in position because of the grace of God?** How much better would your ministry function if you provided humble and unselfish leadership?

## **2. KINGDOM LEADERS MUST KNOW THAT THEY MUST EXERCISE THE POWER OF THEIR POSITIONS RIGHTEOUSLY AND IN THE FEAR OF GOD.** (VV 2- 3)

David makes it clear that the “oracle” of which he spoke in verse 1 came to him from the Lord. *“The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.”* (V 2) He was not merely speaking for God. Rather, God was speaking through David. The oracle itself is short and to the point: *“The one who rules over men must rule justly, and in the fear of God”* (V 3). God affirms his role. When he leads with righteousness and the fear of God, the land is blessed with fruitfulness. The same applies to ministry leaders. We must show anointed leadership, putting ourselves in proper position to receive the instructions of God and taking our own egos out of the way. The definition of righteous is to act **“in accord with divine or moral law: free from guilt or sin.”** This is a question of character. There is a tendency to rule with power and force, but David teaches to rule with righteousness and in the fear in God.

## **3. KINGDOM LEADERS KNOW THAT RIGHTEOUS LEADERSHIP BRINGS GOOD RESULTS.** (V 4)

David went on to describe the good results of a righteous ruler, *“he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.”* (V 4) The description is that of beauty and goodness and delight. He is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings grass from the earth. It’s a picture of fruitfulness and blessings. Fruitfulness flows FROM righteousness and the fear of God. David, and all who serve God, are to serve with righteousness and the fear of God. The Lord highlights these regarding David’s reign – not his bravery, musical talents, or wisdom, which can be true of David. But they are not God’s emphasis. His greatest concerns for the King is that he rules with righteousness and the fear of the Lord. **What a message for our elected leaders today.** Righteous rule brings LIGHT and LIFE. Perhaps, this is why many governments are failing, and so many nations are in chaos and unrest today. Perhaps, this is why there is a failure of leadership in church ministries. Their leaders are doing the opposite.

**Week of September 20– September 26, 2021**

**KINGDOM CITIZENS STRIVING TO  
ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON  
EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

**SEPTEMBER EMPHASIS: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens know that they should not turn a blind eye to injustice in the administration of government. They know that they must be a servant to others by working against government sanctioned inequality.

**WORDS:** Government, Unjust Laws, Civil Disobedience, Inequality

**LESSON THIRTY-NINE: OBEYING GOD AND NOT MAN**

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Have you ever participated in a demonstration or march for the cause of Christ?
2. Do you believe that violence is an acceptable form of protest?
3. Do you believe that the government should have the authority to ban peaceful protest?

**TEXT: ACTS 5:25-29**

**THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT STANDING UP FOR GOD MEANS REMAINING STEADFAST IN THE FACE OF THREATS AND INTIMIDATION.**

**INTRODUCTION:** We conclude this month's series of lessons by examining a situation where the servants of God come in direct conflict with the ruling class. Throughout our history there have been incidents where persons have demonstrated, protested and directly challenged the power of civil authority. From the civil rights movement, the sit-ins and demonstrations, the poor peoples march, the "me too" movement, social justice demonstrations, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the march on the Capitol on January 6, 2021, people have demonstrated in various ways, **some good and some very bad**, to influence government in the name of standing up for what they feel is right. In our lesson today from Acts chapter 5, we encounter a situation where the rulers are trying to prohibit the teaching of God's Word. The Apostle Peter stands boldly to meet the challenge. This incident speaks directly to the soul and conscious of anyone calling himself a Kingdom Citizen. **Ultimately, the people of God must not be intimidated, must not operate in fear, and must not shy away from speaking truth to power!**

**1. KINGDOM MEN MUST KNOW THAT STANDING UP FOR GOD IS NOT AN INVITATION TO VIOLENCE AND LAWLESSNESS (VV 25-26)**

The scripture tells how the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the

party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy because the people were receiving the good news about Jesus. This was happening in Jerusalem, the very seat of their power and authority, threatening to erode their hold on the people. They feared a loss of control, a loss of power, a loss of position, and they weren't about to go down without a fight. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail, commanding that they stop teaching in Jesus' name. They thought they had solved the problem, but the Lord delivered his people from the jail. He frees them not for them to run away but to stand up and be counted. These men could have used the moment to begin a violent insurrection against the government, yet, they peacefully continued the task of teaching about Jesus. The next morning, these men were right back in the temple court preaching in the name of Jesus. ***"Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people. At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles."*** (VV 25-26) **Are you prepared to stand up for the Lord?** The guards go and retrieve the disciples without incident. Violence and lawlessness were not necessary for God's work to be done.

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT GOVERNMENT HAS NO AUTHORITY TO STOP THE PREACHING AND TEACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD.** (V 27-28)

The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ***"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,"*** he said. (V 28) ***"Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."*** We told you to stop, but you have disobeyed us. You have not recognized our authority. You can almost hear them saying: "Don't you know who we are? We are the ordained leaders. We have power. You are making us look bad. Yet, these men of God were not intimidated by threats. Did this arrest and all the harassment and threats against them shut them down? No. As Proverbs 28:1 says, ***"The righteous are as bold as a lion."*** Apparently, the Council had forgotten what these apostles had said the last time they were before them. ***"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."*** Acts 4:19-20 The Apostles remained steadfast in the moment. They trusted in God, and they knew this moment would glorify God. They left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. Their faith was a battle-tested faith that would not wilt under governmental persecution

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THEY MUST BOLDLY DECLARE ALLEGIANCE TO THE WORD OF GOD IN EVERY SITUATION.** (V 29)

God's authority is greater than the government's authority. While we are to obey government, we are also to obey God. His authority trumps government authority. Peter and the other apostles replied: ***"We must obey God rather than human beings."*** (V 29) Have you ever been confronted with one of these choices? Have you ever been so sold out for a cause you stood up in the face of adversity? Kingdom Citizens know that we must honor the Lord in everything we do. That includes our involvement and our interactions with human government officials. Don't look to any politician to save our country. Look to Christ and His Cross. He alone can save it and save us from moral and spiritual ruin.

## **QUARTER 3: JULY-AUGUST-SEPTEMBER**

**JULY 4 ----- SOWING GOOD SEED**

**JULY 11 ----- GOD DOES THE SEPARATING**

**JULY 18 ----- IT IS WORTH THE SACRIFICE**

**JULY 25 ----- AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR SALVATION**

**AUGUST 1 ----- SEEKING GOD'S GUIDANCE FOR WHAT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE**

**AUGUST 8 ----- SEEKING GOD'S PROTECTION WHEN THE ENEMY COMES**

**AUGUST 15 ----- SEEKING TO PREPARE ADEQUATELY IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION**

**AUGUST 22 ----- SEEKING TO FINISH THE TASK**

**AUGUST 29 ----- CELEBRATING GOD'S GREAT VICTORY**

**SEPTEMBER 5 ----- A SERVANT'S ATTITUDE IS REQUIRED**

**SEPTEMBER 12 ----- WARNING AGAINST MAKING UNJUST LAWS**

**SEPTEMBER 19 ----- RULING RIGHTEOUSLY**

**SEPTEMBER 26 ----- OBEYING GOD AND NOT MAN**