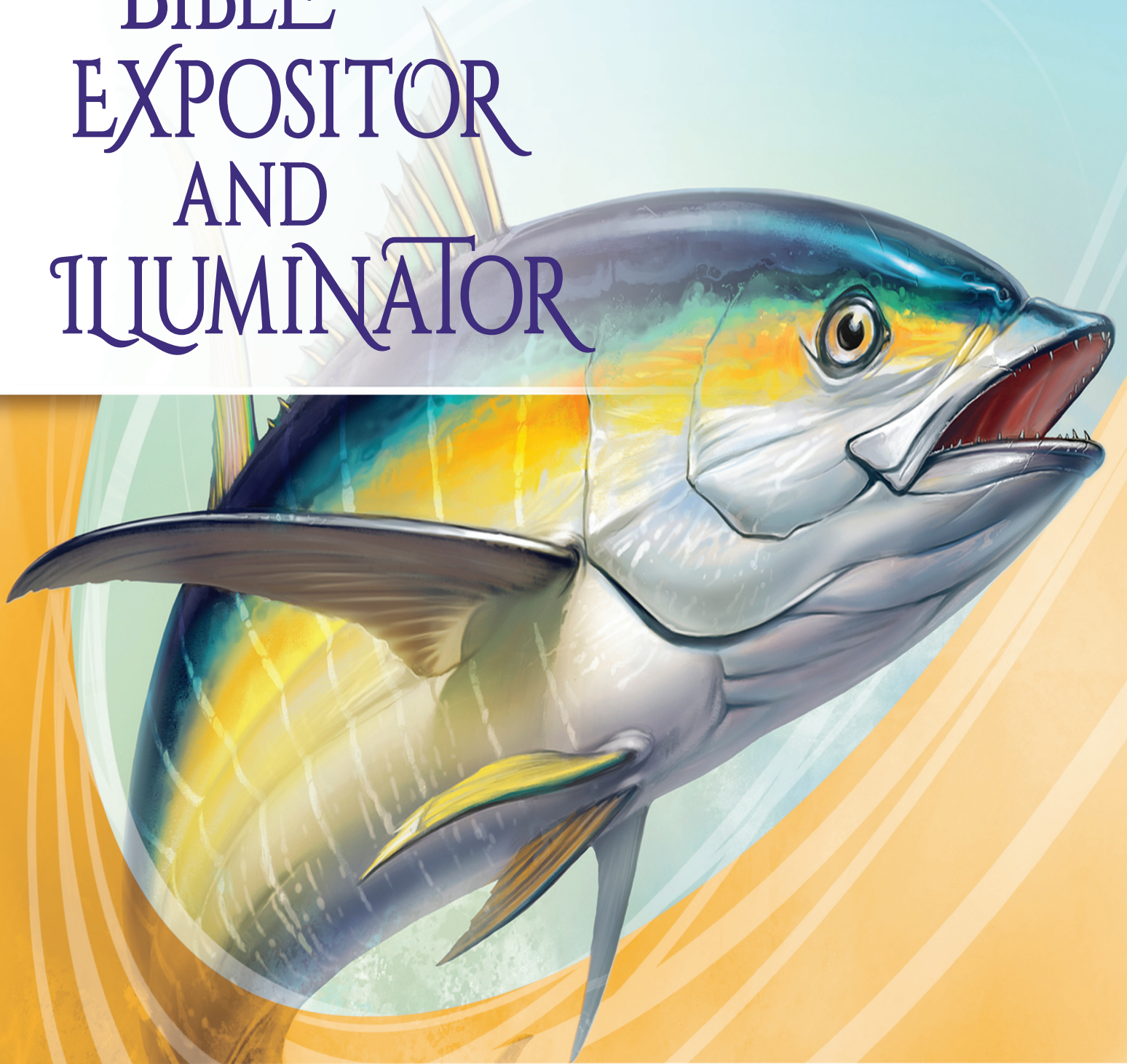


BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR



Summer Quarter
June | July | August 2023

Large-Print Edition

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LOOKING AHEAD

This quarter's lessons will focus on God's kingdom. All of our lessons are taken from Matthew, Mark, and Luke's Gospels. The first four lessons form a unit that focuses on understanding God's kingdom.

Our first lesson is from Matthew's account of Jesus' Beatitudes. In the Beatitudes, the principles of the secular world are reversed; so they seem quite alien from a worldly perspective. Our second lesson is also from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Jesus came to establish a kingdom of righteousness that perfectly fulfills God's law. The third lesson, from Mark chapters 3 and 6, is about God's kingdom and its victory over the kingdoms of this world. Our fourth lesson examines three parables about how God's kingdom grows.

Lessons 5 through 10 form our second unit, which is about how we are to respond to God's kingdom. Lesson 5 is taken from Luke's account of Jesus' model prayer. The Lord's Prayer sets an example for us about the priorities of God's kingdom. Lesson 6 deals with Jesus' teachings on humility. Lesson 7 deals with Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus. The Scriptures are sufficient to produce saving faith; those who reject their witness would not be persuaded by even the greatest miracle. Lesson 8 is about Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats. Those who minister to needy believers minister to the Lord Jesus Himself. Lesson 9 deals with Jesus' use of parables and what it takes to understand their meaning. Lesson 10 examines the role of forgiveness in a Christian's life; if our sins are truly forgiven by God, we will in turn be forgiving toward those who wrong us.

Our final unit of study for this quarter focuses on entering God's kingdom. God restores the lost, deals with us justly, and honors the humble over the proud.

Lesson 11 is about Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. God delights to welcome repentant sinners into His kingdom, no matter how far they have strayed from Him. Lesson 12 is about Jesus' parable of the vineyard workers. God is faithful in dealing with all His servants generously. Lesson 13 discusses Jesus' story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Those who rely on their own righteousness will be condemned, but those who realize their own sinfulness and call upon the Lord for mercy and forgiveness will be saved.

May God bless you abundantly through this quarter's lessons from His Word, the Bible.

—John Lody.

PLEASE NOTE: Fundamental, sound doctrine is the objective of The Incorporated Trustees of the Gospel Worker Society, Union Gospel Press Division. The writers are prayerfully selected for their Bible knowledge and yieldedness to the Spirit of Truth, each writing in his own style as enlightened by the Holy Spirit. At best we know in part only. "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

The Invincible Kingdom of God

TODD WILLIAMS

In 1986, King Mswati III became the sovereign monarch over the African kingdom of Swaziland (now called the Kingdom of Eswatini). While we generally understand what a kingdom is, the word “kingdom” is rarely used in contemporary settings. It typically brings to mind castles, walled cities, and knights riding out in shining armor. Of the handful of modern nations who have a king, very few allow him any real authority. It is crucial to recognize, however, that it is as a kingdom with an absolutely sovereign King that we must understand God’s rule and reign. He is not an elected official, and He does not need popular support to accomplish His will. This reality is behind much of this quarter’s teaching.

It is helpful to recognize that when Adam disobeyed God’s command in Eden, he turned the whole human race into rebels against God (Rom. 5:12, 19). No one is born with a heart that is loyal to the divine King (3:9-18). The only way anyone becomes a subject in this righteous kingdom, therefore, is for the person to humbly seek a pardon from God. No individual becomes a loyal subject without first experiencing a profound change of heart like the prodigal son (Luke 15:17-20; cf. Acts 3:19). Nevertheless, most of the lessons in this study expose a sad reality: many people make a mere show of being citizens in God’s kingdom without having a real change of heart (see lessons 4, 6-13).

The true and loyal subjects of God’s kingdom are those whose hearts have been energized by God’s Spirit. Their desires and values have been completely turned upside down (Matt. 5). Since the people of this world are ruled by Satan (I John 5:19), there is a striking

difference seen in those who serve God (Matt. 5:16; II Cor. 6:14-15; Eph. 5:11-13). Followers of God love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them (Matt. 5:44). They are meek and merciful (vss. 5, 7). When they mourn, they find comfort (vs. 4). When they hunger and thirst for righteousness, their passion is satisfied (vs. 6). They truly have ears to hear the truth (Matt. 13:16). None of these things are true of worldly people.

This stark difference is represented prominently in Jesus’ parables. God’s followers are those who accept the invitation to the banquet (Luke 14:21-23), who provide the drink of water to Christ’s followers (Matt. 25:37-40), and who seek God in humility (Luke 15:18-19; 18:13). Rebels against God are, on the other hand, represented in Jesus’ parables by the tares (Matt. 13:25), by those who refuse to attend the banquet (Luke 14:18-20), and by the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:32-33).

So what is it that Christ was proclaiming when He said, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17)? At the very least, He was announcing that the unassailable power of God’s kingdom was poised to strike a death blow to the powers of darkness. Christ’s exorcisms proved that the advance of God’s kingdom against Satan could not be halted. Through Christ’s teaching and miracles of healing, He countered the ruin and woes brought on humanity through Satan’s work. Christ brought a message of light, life, and goodness to a world fraught with hatred, hostility, and bitterness.

As you study this quarter’s lessons about God’s kingdom, you will see a focus on the practical outworking of God’s kingdom power in the lives of His

(Editorials continued on page 186)

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

MATT. 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

3 Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7 Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

NOTES

Upside-Down Kingdom

Lesson Text: Matthew 5:1-16

Related Scriptures: Psalm 24:1-6; Isaiah 66:1-2;
Luke 6:20-26; Hebrews 11:36-38

TIME: A.D. 28

PLACE: mountain near Capernaum

GOLDEN TEXT—"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

Introduction

Matthew, who was also known as Levi (Matt. 9:9; Luke 5:27), was a tax collector who had left his business to follow Christ. He was one of the twelve apostles and in characteristic fashion humbly referred to himself as a tax collector, or publican (Matt. 10:3). Many have noted that Mark is a book of action that does not stress the lengthy discourses that Jesus sometimes used in His teaching. Matthew, however, included several lengthy discourses in his book. He also repeatedly used the phrase "kingdom of heaven" as he presented Jesus as the Messiah-King.

The first of the discourses in Matthew is what we know as the Sermon

on the Mount (chaps. 5—7).

The Sermon on the Mount describes the kind of righteousness Jesus expects of His followers. It must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees (Matt. 5:20) and will be realized fully in Christ's kingdom. It is also a standard we should strive for.

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. **THE INDIVIDUAL HEART—
Matt. 5:1-6**
- II. **RELATIONSHIPS WITH
OTHERS—Matt. 5:7-12**
- III. **RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE
WORLD—Matt. 5:13-16**

Exposition: Verse by Verse

THE INDIVIDUAL HEART

MATT. 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

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