

Study Guide: Welcome to the Kingdom (Luke 6:20-26)

Summary

Jesus begins His covenantal declaration of the Kingdom of God by addressing His disciples with a paradigm-shifting message about blessedness. Rather than defining blessing through worldly measures of wealth and power, Jesus reveals a kingdom where the poor, hungry, mourning, and persecuted are declared blessed, not because their circumstances are desirable, but because they belong to the Kingdom of God. This kingdom is already present through Christ's reign in the hearts of believers, yet awaits its future consummation.

Key Points

1. **The Sermon on the Mount is a Covenantal Declaration** — This is not merely ethical teaching but a formal declaration of God's Kingdom that parallels Moses's covenant declaration to Israel, establishing Jesus as the New Moses and the authority of His Kingdom.
2. **The Structure of Jesus's Teaching** — Luke's version presents the Kingdom through four major sections: (1) A Kingdom Among Us, (2) A Kingdom of Unusual Love, (3) A Kingdom That Cannot Be Counterfeited, and (4) You Are Given the Keys to the Kingdom.
3. **The Word "Blessed" Carries Profound Meaning** — The Greek word "makarios" originally meant "godlike blessedness" and was associated with wealth and power. Jesus radically redefines it to include the poor, hungry, and persecuted, creating a paradigm shift in understanding true blessing.
4. **The Beatitudes Apply Specifically to Disciples** — Jesus addresses His followers, not making broad social statements. The blessedness comes from suffering "for the Son of Man's sake"—for Christ's glory, not from deprivation in itself.
5. **The Kingdom Has Four Defining Characteristics:**
 - A Kingdom with a King (Christ rules, not through territory but through hearts)
 - A Kingdom of People, not Territory (spiritual and universal sovereignty over willing hearts)
 - A Kingdom Already Present but Not Yet Fully Realized (the "already-but-not-yet" tension)
 - A Kingdom Seen by Disciples but Not by the World (requires spiritual perception)

Key Verses

- **Luke 6:20** — "Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God."
- **Luke 6:22-23** — "Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven."
- **Deuteronomy 33:29** — "Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD..."
- **Acts 5:41** — "So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."
- **Colossians 1:13** — Believers transferred to the realm of Christ's kingdom

- **1 Peter 2:9** — "A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people"

Points for Further Study

1. **The Septuagint Connection** — Study how the Greek translation of the Old Testament shaped Jesus's audience's understanding of "blessed" and covenant language.
2. **The Already-But-Not-Yet Kingdom** — Take note of verses in the apostles' letters that show this tension between the present reality of God's Kingdom and its future consummation, particularly in Paul's and Peter's writings. A good starting point is Colossians 1:13 and 1 Peter 2:9.
3. **Matthew vs. Luke's Gospel Structure** — Do a study on how Luke disperses portions of the Sermon throughout his Gospel while Matthew keeps it consolidated in chapters 5-7.
4. **Matthew's Version of the Sermon on the Mountain:**
 1. **A Kingdom Among Us (Beatitudes)** (Matthew 5:1-12)
 2. **A Kingdom of Salt & Light** (Matthew 5:13-16):
 3. **A Kingdom that Fulfills the Law** (Matthew 5:17-37)
 4. **A Kingdom of Unusual Love** (Matthew 5:38-48)
 5. **A Kingdom that Cannot Be Counterfeited** (Matthew 6:1-7:23)
 6. **You Are Given the Keys to the Kingdom** (Matthew 7:24-27)

Questions for Discussion

1. What does "blessed" mean to you, and how does Jesus's definition change your understanding of it?
2. How does understanding the Kingdom as "already present but not yet fully realized" change the way you live as a Christian today? What does it mean to experience kingdom blessings now while awaiting their consummation?
3. Jesus uses the word "blessed" in a way that echoes Moses and King David. Why do you think Jesus intentionally connected His teaching to these Old Testament figures? What authority was He claiming?
4. If the Kingdom of God is a kingdom of people rather than territory, what are the implications for how we should live in our communities and neighborhoods?
5. Luke disperses the Sermon on the Mount throughout his Gospel to show the Kingdom was central to Christ's entire ministry. How does this change your view of Jesus's teaching and mission?
6. What is one specific way you can live as a citizen of God's Kingdom this week, particularly in how you love others and build your life on Christ's words?