

# Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven

## Matthew 5:27-48 | God's Standard

→ *Survey: Let's understand the background and context of the passage.*

What is the Kingdom of Heaven all about? In our first two studies we have seen how God's Kingdom is really an Upside-Down Kingdom - one marked by humility, love, and sacrifice - not in the ways that the Jewish people expected. Last week we heard Jesus say he came not to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them. He's revealing to the Jewish people listening to him that he is better than their greatest prophet - that he is the new and better Moses. Jesus began to show that sin isn't just the bad actions that we commit, but it actually starts in the heart. Our study tonight will continue to explore this reality as Jesus gives more examples of what sinfulness actually looks like during his Sermon on the Mount. Keep in mind that Jesus is helping his listeners see what it means to be Kingdom people: people who bring love, hope, peace, and all things good to earth.

As we grow in our faith, the awareness of our sin and God's holiness becomes greater. This doesn't mean we become more sinful, or God becomes more holy, but in maturity we recognize more and more the great chasm that stands between us and God's standard of perfection. So what's the answer? Do we just work harder and do better to earn a place in the Kingdom of Heaven? Or do we hide our struggles and pretend like we're better than we really are? No - the true answer is also good news: "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). This is why Jesus is good news! While you were at your worst, God chose to love you. Because of this, you are not defined by the worst or the best thing you have ever done, but by Jesus himself. His perfection welcomes you into God's family, if only you repent and believe. In other words, if you turn away from your sinfulness and run to Jesus, believing that he is all you need, you will be saved! This truth allows us to freely bring our sin to the light, where we are met not with judgment, but with love and mercy. Have you experienced this freedom?

**Read: Matthew 5:27-48 (NIV)**

→ *Observe: Let's take a close look at what the text is saying.*

1. What pattern or repetition do you notice at the beginning of each paragraph?
2. Which of the 10 commandments does Jesus bring to mind (v. 27)? What perspective does he give to his listeners (v. 28)?
3. What should people do to the things that cause them to stumble? What 2 examples does Jesus give (v. 29-30)? Why does he say this - what reason does he give (v. 29-30)?
4. What topic does Jesus bring up next (v. 31)? What perspective does Jesus give (v. 32)?
5. What is the next topic (v. 33)? What perspective does Jesus give - what reasons should you swear by, or give oath to (v. 34-37)?
6. What is the next topic (v. 38)? What perspective & examples does Jesus give (v. 39-42)?
7. What is the last topic (v. 43)? What perspective does Jesus give (v. 44)?
8. How does Jesus summarize these laws - what is the standard (v. 48)?

→ *Interpret: Let's seek to understand the meaning of this text in its original context.*

1. Let's look at the first example together in verse 27. What is adultery, and what point is Jesus making about adultery in verse 28? Is one worse than the other? Why/why not?
  - Why does Jesus give such a strong metaphor about the things that cause us to stumble (v. 29-30)? Even if we mutilate ourselves to stop sinning, what problem remains? How would you summarize this topic? What word or short phrase would describe the characteristics of Kingdom-people in light of this topic?
  
2. Let's look at the other 4 topics in small groups. What is the topic, and what point is Jesus making about it? How would you summarize this conversation? What word or short phrase would describe the characteristics of Kingdom-people in light of this topic?
  
3. So what's the real problem in all these scenarios? What's the solution?

→ *Apply: Let's explore where the text intersects with our lives and our world.*

1. Just to recap, what is the standard people are supposed to live by (v. 48)? What should be our attitude about sin - how do the examples in verses 29-30 help?
  - Why then is it so hard for us to admit our own sins? Which of these topics from the passage do you struggle with?
  
  - What would it look like to take your sin seriously this week? Are there changes that you can make right now to live more faithfully?
  
2. How does this passage help you understand your need for Jesus?