

ALLEGIANCE

MATTHEW 7:15–23

LESSON 1



WELCOME

What people or things do you feel loyalty toward?

BACKGROUND

Allegiance is not a word that is used much in everyday conversation anymore. For some, it could be a word that doesn't hold much meaning because it's not fully understood. Allegiance can be described using more common language such as devotion or loyalty.¹ Perhaps it evokes memories of standing in a classroom and saying a pledge to the American flag. Allegiance is an extremely important concept; where we place our allegiance matters greatly.

We, as believers, are called to be loyal and devoted to God above all else—to His Kingdom and to His will. There are many things that can enter our lives, both brazenly and inconspicuously, and take our devotion away from God and His Kingdom. Yet, "To live under the reign of a king requires people to relinquish any allegiance they might have to another king."² We cannot serve more than one king. As we look closer at the Kingdom of God, we will ask ourselves the questions: Is my allegiance to Him alone? How do I live out my allegiance?



WORD

As you come to the Word, pause and ask God to make it come alive for you.

Context: Matthew 7:15–23 is found in the middle of Jesus' most famous teaching, the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5–7**). In this sermon Jesus described His Kingdom, a Kingdom very different from the Roman kingdom His audience lived under. And, it was very different from the type of Messianic Kingdom they had envisioned and

¹ Merriam-Webster.com

² Wakabayashi, Allen Mitsuo. *Kingdom Come: How Jesus Wants to Change the World*. InterVarsity Press, 2003. 38

were anticipating.³ While a coming King, and therefore a Kingdom, had been prophesied throughout the Old Testament, the Kingdom Jesus described was much broader, deeper and more challenging than what they were expecting. His Kingdom required total allegiance.

Matthew 7:15–23

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. ¹⁶ You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. ¹⁹ So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions. ²¹ “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ ²³ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’”

1. How did Jesus describe false prophets? How can they be identified? **(7:15–16)**

2. What are the differences between a good tree and a bad tree? **(7:17–19)**

³ Schreiner, Patrick. *The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross*. Crossway, 2018. 86. They were expecting an earthly, political kingdom where the Messiah would rule and they would rule with Him.

3. Who can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (Kingdom of God)?⁴
(7:21)

In this passage, “Jesus was distinguishing between lip service and real discipleship. It is much easier to profess Christianity than to possess it. Those who will enter the kingdom of heaven are only those who do the will of my Father in heaven. To do God’s will implies a relationship with God—the ability to communicate with him, to know his will, and then be able to perform it. Such ‘fruit’ reveals one who will enter the kingdom of heaven.”⁵

How would you describe the difference between lip service and real discipleship?

4. What will happen on judgment day?⁶ (7:22–23)

⁴ Remember, in the Gospel of Matthew, it is called the Kingdom of Heaven; although synonymous with the Kingdom of God in meaning, Matthew’s phrasing surely emphasizes its spiritual nature. Youngblood, Ronald F. *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. HarperCollins Christian Pub, 2014. 732

⁵ Barton, Bruce B. *Life Application Bible Commentary: Matthew*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1996. 141

⁶ Judgment day refers to “the final judgment, the ultimate separation of good and evil at the end of history.” Youngblood, Ronald F. *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. HarperCollins Christian Pub, 2014. 647

a. **Matthew 7:22–23** can be a humbling and difficult passage. Many people may wonder how we can know we are truly saved if some people who do amazing miracles will be cast away from God. While we can't know what is in the hearts of people, we need to remember that God clearly sees the whole person and knows each person's relationship with Him.⁷ Therefore, there is only so much that a person's public actions can tell us. Note your thoughts and discuss these concepts with your group.

b. It's also important to remember that we look at the Bible as a whole message and read passages like this one in light of other Scriptures. How can the following verses help relieve any fear you may have about being truly known by God and confident in your salvation?

i. **Ephesians 2:8–9**

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

ii. **Ephesians 1:13–14**

And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee

⁷ 1 Samuel 16:7

that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

iii. **Philippians 1:6**

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

iv. **John 10:27–29**

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand.

- c. “Jesus exposed those people who sounded religious and did religious deeds but had no personal relationship with him. On ‘judgment day’ only our relationship with Christ—our acceptance of him as Savior and our obedience to him—will matter.”⁸ Jesus wants a relationship with His children, not just religious words or works. How does having a relationship with Jesus—knowing Him personally and deeply—affect your desire to give allegiance (loyalty and devotion) to Him?

⁸ *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1553

5. Jesus calls His children to be loyal to Him and His Kingdom. He wants an entirely devoted relationship with us. Underline how the following verses further explain allegiance to Jesus and His Kingdom.

a. **Matthew 6:33**

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

b. **John 8:31–32**

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

c. **Luke 14:26⁹**

“If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.

d. **Matthew 6:24**

“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

e. **Mark 8:34–37**

Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?”

⁹“The phrase ‘by comparison’ does not appear in the Greek, but it accurately represents Jesus’ meaning.” *Illustrated Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2015. 1862

It’s important to remember that Jesus isn’t asking us to forsake things that are important; rather, it is a matter of the level of importance we give to them. “Jesus made this statement to get the crowds to think through their enthusiasm for him. He encouraged those who were superficial either to go deeper or to turn back.” *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1718

6. What does allegiance to God look like in your life?

- a. What other kinds of allegiances do you have (people, places, businesses, reputation, things, your country, etc.)?

- b. “So the gospel of the kingdom calls for our allegiance to God over any other allegiance we might feel compelled to live for. It’s about putting Jesus on the top of our life priority list. It’s about letting go of anything that will keep us from following Jesus wholeheartedly.”¹⁰ Is there anything in your life that Holy Spirit may be telling you is taking allegiance over God?¹¹ If so, what is it?

- c. What practical steps can you take to continue to surrender this part of your life to God in allegiance to Him?

¹⁰ Wakabayashi, Allen Mitsuo. *Kingdom Come: How Jesus Wants to Change the World*. InterVarsity Press, 2003. 39

¹¹ Surrendering our lives to Jesus is an ongoing, life-long process. When we continue to give different aspects of our lives (hobbies, work, family, friends, etc.) over to Him in allegiance, He infuses them with fresh meaning and significance. Treat, Jeremy R. *Seek First: How the Kingdom of God Changes Everything*. Zondervan, 2019. 14



WORSHIP

Take a moment to enter into a time of worship—both on your own and with your community—to show praise, adoration and love for God.

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

Romans 12:1

Prayerfully consider writing out a pledge of allegiance, devotion, loyalty and/or surrender to God. You may want to put the pledge somewhere you can see it on a regular basis, to remind you of your allegiance to Him and His Kingdom.

I pledge allegiance to the King of kings.

I surrender these areas of my life...

King Jesus, may Your Kingdom come, may Your will be done in my life.

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Consider using one of the conversation prompts this week to begin having a spiritual conversation with someone in your life.

- When you hear the word allegiance, what comes to mind?
- To what people or things do you feel the greatest loyalty?
- What is the central thing your life revolves around?

TAKE-AWAY SUMMARY

As you have worked through this lesson and listened to Holy Spirit, what is your one significant take-away?

Write a brief summary of your take-away on page 116.

SERMON NOTES

Lesson 1

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying most of the page. It is intended for the user to write their sermon notes for Lesson 1.

Prayer Requests