

**GOD'S CHILDREN**  
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Matthew 18:1-4

1. When Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration He dealt with a demon possessed boy, continued to try and prepare His disciples for what was soon to take place, and miraculously provided the money He and Peter needed to pay the Temple tax. Matthew 17:14-27
2. He was staying in Capernaum, probably at Peter's home.
3. The disciples came to Jesus with a question concerning greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven.
4. Both Mark and Luke reveal that the disciples had been discussing this issue among themselves to the point that they got into an argument as to which of them might be the greatest. Luke 9:46-48  
An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest. 47 But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, 48 and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great."
5. They should have already known the answer because Jesus had dealt with the issue in His previous teaching, but even this exchange did not resolve it.
  - a. Sometime later the mother of James and John came to Jesus and asked, "Command that in Your Kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on your right and one on your left." Matthew 20:21
  - b. Even during the Last Supper we read, "And there arose a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be the greatest." Luke 22:24
6. Jesus responded to the disciple's question by presenting a, "...discourse or sermon on the specific theme of the childlikeness of the believer, speaking directly to the reality that we are spiritual children with all the weaknesses that childhood implies." John MacArthur
  - a. As children of God we are joint heirs with Christ and enjoy God's love, care, protection, power and other resources.
  - b. At the same time we are, in ourselves, weak, dependent, impressionable, vulnerable and sometimes childish in our behavior.
7. In this chapter Jesus pointed out that we:
  - a. Must enter the Kingdom like children. 1-4
  - b. Must be carefully dealt with like children. 5-9
  - c. Must be cared for like children. 10-14
  - d. Must be disciplined as children. 15-20
  - e. Must be forgiven like children. 21-35
8. Over the next few weeks we will do our best to deal with these issues and how they relate to us today.
9. Jesus called a child (a toddler that He probably knew) to Himself, set him before them, and proceeded to use the child as a visual aid.

**I. The Kingdom of Heaven must be entered.**

- A. The child Jesus called to Himself was a member of some family into which he had been born.
- B. He represented both a responsibility and potential.

C. Jesus stated that unless certain things were true, “You will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

D. Each time Jesus used this phrase He was referring to personal salvation.

1. Matthew 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' **will enter the kingdom of heaven**, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

2. Matthew 19:23-26

And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to **enter the kingdom of heaven**. 24 "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" 26 And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

E. The fact that individuals must enter the Kingdom of Heaven indicates that all who have not entered are still on the outside.

F. It is possible to be very close to entering and yet fail to do so.

1. Mark 12:34

When Jesus saw that he (a scribe) had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

2. Acts 26:27-29

"King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." 28 Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." 29 And Paul said, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains."

NOTE: We enter the Kingdom of God when we become a genuine follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **II. The Kingdom of Heaven is entered by those who have been converted and become like children (specifically like the child that stood before them.)”**

A. The word converted means to make an about face and to go in the opposite direction.

B. Conversion is preceded by repentance (a divine work of God that results in a new mindset.)

1. Speaking of Jesus Peter declared, “He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Acts 5:31

2. Paul wrote, “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

3. For further study read Isaiah 55:6-9 and Acts 26:15-20.

C. Repentance must be followed by conversion—turning from sin and self to embrace Jesus Christ by faith. Mark 1:15

“The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel.”

D. Those who repent and are converted become the children of God. John 1:12-13

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

### **III. Greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven is measured by the degree of humility one possesses.**

- A. Jesus used the child that was standing next to Him as an example. 4
  - 1. This child knew and trusted Jesus.
  - 2. When Jesus called the child responded without hesitation or argument.
  - 3. As Jesus taught the child was content to just stand near Him and be used as an object lesson.
- B. Humility involves the total surrender of self and self-will to the plans and purposes of God for our lives.
- C. God cannot fill and use a vessel that is already filled with pride, selfish ambition, self-will, and the like.

#### **APPLICATION**

- 1. We live in a confusing time because in their zeal to make disciples many have adulterated the Gospel by oversimplifying it.
- 2. The goal is to get people to perform a certain ritual rather than coming to the place of genuine repentance and conversion.
- 3. Paul declared that the Gospel is the power of God for (leading to) salvation to everyone who believes. Romans 1:16
- 4. When God is actually dealing with a person they will know it and make it known.