

## The Kingdom Belongs To...: Part 2

In studying this issue of to whom the Kingdom belongs, we began to explore to whom it does not belong. God communicates to us so definitively about this issue and He wants us to understand the difference because of our natural tendency to want to join ourselves in fellowship to anyone who says they “love God.” But He tells us to beware, to have wisdom, and in **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** to not be bound together with those who do not truly belong to the Kingdom of God. No matter how uncomfortable we might be with His instruction, He does this for our protection so that our source of intimacy and fellowship is reserved for those who call on the Lord with a pure heart.

**1 John 5:19** says, “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” This is a very intense statement which makes the point that you are either in one kingdom or the other—the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of this world which is ruled by the evil one. This raises the question how can we know for sure that we are of God? **1 John** lays out various proofs for us to consider. We covered each of these when we studied the building blocks of the Kingdom of God: faith, hope, and love. But let’s review them again.

- We believe in the NAME of the Son of God (**1 John 5:13**); in other words, we bet our lives on His Name believing all that He says He is to us and all that He says we are to Him.
- We love God and observe His commandments (**1 John 5:2**). And since this love is “*agape*” love—or divine love—it means that God must possess our being so He can practically become our love and our obedience as He lives

through us.

- We love our brothers and sisters with God's *agape* love (**1 John 3:14; 4:7-8, 20**). The same reality applies. We can love because He is love and He abides in us and we abide in Him.
- This love is shown in our actions (**1 John 3:16-19**). God's love is not theoretical, passive, nor something that we just keep to ourselves; it is for others. However, His love in our life is premised upon His possession and domination of our lives.
- We live or abide in God's *agape* love (**1 John 4:17**). His love in our lives is not a temporary experience, but for a true believer it is their way of life. We are known by this love; it marks us. He love is literally our lifestyle.
- His Spirit lives in us (**1 John 3:24; 4:13**). We can be certain that the Spirit lives in us if we love, for the fruit of the Spirit is love. And this love is easily identified because it demonstrated by joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- We do not continue to abide in sin (**1 John 3:6; 5:18**). With God abiding in our lives, we do not continue to live in sin because He does not sin. This dynamic is a true indication of whether or not He dominates your being. Just don't be deceived. Sin is not about our bad behavior; that is merely the product of sin, which indicates that we still abide in sin. Sin is the wrong belief and unbelief which bars our ability to believe in the **Name**.
- We walk in the same manner as He walked (**1 John 2:5-6**). Thus, we only do what the Father tells us to do, we only go where the Father tells us to go, and we only say what the Father tells us to say. Our food and our very

life is to be found in doing the will of our Father. That's how Jesus did it, that's how we do it; and it's worked out pretty well so far.

The Kingdom belongs to such as these. So this instruction to us regarding who is and who is not truly a part of the Kingdom of God is in large part about our owning our identity as true sons of God. It is about giving us a reason to stand separated, as aliens and strangers, from all that is in this world. We don't need to strive to be accepted and loved by everyone, much less all those in the so called religious community of faith. In fact, Jesus specifically warns about this in **Luke 6:26**, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way." Despite how wonderful it feels to be liked, wanted, and needed; it is not a good thing. If you find that you are loved by the many, beware. Accordingly, we are commanded to now pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart (**2 Timothy 2:22**).

The passage we are using to explore all of this is **Matthew 7:13-27**. Last week we covered **7:13-20** where we concluded that we will know who is or is not in the Kingdom of God by their fruits. For instance, a bad tree does not produce "good" fruit—or the fruit that comes only from God, being that only God is good (**Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19**). Tonight we will pick up our study in **7:21**, but first let's read the entire passage.

### **Matthew 7:13-27**

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is

small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.

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. 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?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS."

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell — and great was its fall."

We explored the differences among those who choose to enter by the wide gate and take the broad road that leads to ruin and loss and those who choose to enter through the narrow gate and take the road of tribulation that leads to life. Those

who truly belong to God, those on the road of tribulation, are now and continually putting to death the things of the *flesh* thereby giving God greater and greater access to their lives enabling Him to freely live through them. Sure, as they are dying things are awfully messy, but as things become dead this pathway births the fruit of God's *agape* love. Love is the absolute demonstrative proof that one belongs to the Kingdom. Hence the statement, and you will know them by their fruits.

Most people however tend to avoid pain; in fact, their whole lives and all their coping mechanisms are aimed at escaping pain and never reliving the pain from their past. But those on the road of tribulation learn to embrace the pain as God purifies their lives, believing it was and is necessary. They know that before they can live in peace and joy everything that is not of God must be stripped and torn away from their lives. They understand that they must first be circumcised from this world and second they must undergo the flood waters of judgment and the fires of purification. This is the pathway that leads to life.

After Jesus makes the point of the fruit and the trees, He says something that is so shocking that most people do not want to even consider its implications; and, therefore, tend to avoid this passage. "Not everyone who now says and continues to say to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who now does and continues to do the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." (Both of these phrases are rendered in the *present active participle*). The fact that He says, "Not everyone who says to **Me**" gives us our context in terms of "who" He is addressing. Clearly, Jesus is the narrow gate and the only entry point into the Kingdom. Thus, He narrows the application of this statement away from all the

religious people in the world and He specifically targets those who would call Him “Lord.” Clearly, He is not speaking to those in Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism, Mormonism, or any other major world religion that does not consider Jesus to be the Lord. Jesus is exclusively addressing the group of people who would consider Him to be their Lord—those within the ranks of Christianity.

Then just so you fully understand and do not miss what He is getting at, Jesus takes this subset of people (those who believe they are Christians) and narrows it even further when He says that they say to Him, “**Lord, Lord.**” Being Jewish, Jesus utilizes a Hebrew linguistic technique and He repeats the word for strong and intense emphasis. Hebrew had no punctuation, so repetition was a powerful form of emphasizing one’s point. In other words, Jesus is not just addressing those who would generally consider Him to be the “Lord” (the masses of people around the world—both Catholics and Protestants—who believe they are Christian), but by saying “Lord, Lord” He is addressing this comment to those who **ACTUALLY CONSIDER HIM TO BE THEIR LORD!** This whole concept is getting more and more shocking; upsetting even.

In other words, we can separate out from this group all the “church goers,” and those who say they believe but are clearly casual Christians. It’s as if they are so far out of the picture they are not even considered in this statement. Therefore, to deal with this passage with integrity, we must narrow our focus to all those who are actively involved in the heartbeat of Christianity; those who, by what they say and do, are absolutely convinced they belong. This is who Jesus addresses.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ **will enter** the Kingdom of heaven;” and, being rendered in the *indicative*, this is a statement of fact. Jesus is not trying

to scare you, but to explain the spiritual reality in order that you might discern the difference between truth and religious fantasy. It is interesting to discover that “enter” is rendered in the *future* tense and *middle* voice. In other words, it is saying they will not choose to dig down deep in their soul and make the hard core decision to enter the Kingdom through the narrow gate and traverse along the pathway of tribulation. It is a choice; and they will not make it. This is why Jesus said in **Luke 13:24**, “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” “Strive” is rendered in the *present middle imperative*. Thus, we know it is a command we must dig down deep into our soul and choose to obey in our now. Furthermore, the Greek “*agonizomai*” translated as “Strive” is where we get our word to agonize; and it literally means to fight (as with an adversary), and to fervently labor.

Think about all that we have had to “fight” and “fervently labor” against. Every cell in our body, our emotions, and all our thoughts are bent on doing things our way and having God conform His Word to our will. For example, we have been convinced, and absolutely committed to the belief, that we are good or can be good like God. And, if we were absolutely honest, plugged into a lie detector, we would have to admit that we have believed that we must be our own: defender; protector; guide; Lord (the one who has the wisdom and know it all to lead our own life); safe place of refuge; healer; the lover of our soul; our own portion (convinced we can be enough); source of joy; fulfillment; glory; and even our own righteousness. We go through this life striving to be the provider of all that we believe we need.

The Biblical narrative makes it clear that we are idolatrous by nature and we tend to worship first and foremost ourselves. This is why we must walk down the road

of tribulation. Through the trials, troubles, and persecutions we will learn and finally become convinced that we cannot be God. And unless we are willing to go to all-out **war** against our idolatrous nature, and fight, strive, and labor against our *flesh*, we will not learn to truly believe in His **Name**. We will not learn that He is everything we have tried to be. “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”

This explains why so few people actually experience life and peace. They have not chosen to enter the narrow gate and travel down the road of tribulation. They have enough confidence in their *flesh*—specifically their religious *flesh*—that they think they are ok with God. Yet, according to **Romans 8:6-8** when we put so much confidence in our *flesh*, we experience nothing but loss and ruin—destruction! After all, the mind set on the *flesh* is death; and this form of spiritual death produces a very lonely life. In fact, those who are now of the *flesh* and continue in the *flesh* cannot please God, because He won’t let them. This phrase is rendered in the *present passive participle*. Whereas, those who abide in the Spirit, those who know they are of God, experience life and peace.

Let’s review. Many come to this gate, many will want to enter the Kingdom, and with great emotion and intention they will call Jesus Lord, but still they won’t be able to enter, and that is a statement of fact (it is rendered in the *indicative*). Only those who “strive,” “fight,” “fervently labor,” and go to war against their *flesh* will be able to enter. Only those who choose to bet their lives on His **Name** (those who truly believe in His **Name**) will be permitted to enter. Remember, without faith it is impossible to please God (**Hebrews 11:6**). Thus, our eternal position has never been about what we do, but always only about what we believe and what stems forth



from that belief.

So we have to ask ourselves, why would these people who **CONSIDER HIM TO BE THEIR LORD** not know they don't actually belong? Keep in mind, we are not talking about the charlatans or the wolves dressed in sheep clothing that we addressed in **Matthew 7:15**, we are talking about those who are personally convinced they belong. Let me answer; the system to which they have pledged their allegiance has them deceived. Sadly, instead of taking the Word of God as their absolute personal authority, they have let their own perspective of what God wants and desires, as taught to them in the Religion of Christianity, be their source of instruction and their source of authority. The result is that they substitute faith for works; and because God uses them and does some amazing things through what they "do," they are absolutely convinced they belong.

Consider that Jesus said, "Many—not a few, but 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?" What? Yes, God used these people to do amazing works for the welfare and blessing of others, and still they don't belong. They prophesied, they cast out demons and took on the enemy in great battles, and they did many miracles; and they were all done in His Name. If they have been used so much by God, how is it possible they don't belong?

Remember, God even used a donkey, a greedy, hateful prophet in Balaam, and an idolatrous king in Cyrus, to take care for His people. The point is that God will use anyone to perform His deeds. In other words, His willingness to bless others and have mercy on others through a person bears no connection at all to the true spiritual identity of the person He used. Such great deeds are merely a reflection of

God's willingness to have mercy upon those He chooses to have mercy. Thus, it does not matter if you are a pastor, an elder, a ministry leader, or any other person who is adept and fully engaged in the "works" of the Lord, it does not matter how much God has used you, and it does not even matter how many people have come to God and have been blessed because of you, you are merely a tool which God has chosen to use. Furthermore, these works bear no relationship to the fruit of the Spirit—the true indicator of belonging to the Kingdom.

I want you to understand how this religious system works. When God uses someone and they have success in ministry, they are absolutely convinced that they belong. In fact, the bigger the ministry, the more active they are in ministry, the more results they get from the ministry, the more they are convinced. This is a deception that continues to reinforce itself all because God is merciful and continues to work. This proves out what I said earlier about the way people love their own goodness and believe they can be good like God. The work that God accomplished through them in others people's lives is a result of God's compassion, not their greatness, or effort even. But they take from the glory of God and ascribe it to themselves, and feel like they must be "good" with God because they have done so much for God and He has used them so much.

I want you to reach back into your memories to when we were in the book of **Revelation**. This was the whole point of **Revelation 17-18**, which describes the destruction of the Woman who rides the Beast and the lament, shock, and dismay of all those who follow her. When we studied this, we came to understand that this Woman represents religion. And when God judges this Woman and destroys her, all the merchants of the earth (those who have done business with her and market

her wares), all the shipmasters, passengers, sailors, and all who make their living by the sea will be terrified when they see her destruction. These merchants, shipmasters, passengers, and sailors are all pictures of those who function in her religious system and have done amazing things with this Woman. They have sailed the seas of humanity, traded with others who do the same, and have performed amazing deeds out on the waves; but despite their bluster of religious activity, they still do not know God. Thus, they are terrified when they see her destruction.

Jesus (quoting *Psalm 6:8*) said that He will declare to those who say, “**Lord, Lord,**”—those through whom God has done all these amazing things, “I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.” This is beyond intense. In the Greek, He literally said, I never, at any time, never at all, knew you; and that is a statement of fact (it is rendered in the *aorist active indicative*). They prophesied in His name, cast out demons, and in His name performed many powerful miracles, but He never knew them. And so He says, “Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.” They will stand before Him in judgment, but instead of the gates of heaven swinging wide to welcome them and celebrate all that they “did” for God, He will command them (it is an *imperative*) to depart and leave His presence. He then describes them as those who now practice and continually practice lawlessness. In fact, they dug down deep in their soul and made this choice—“practice” rendered in the *present middle participle*.

Think about what He said. In effect prophesying, casting out demons, conquering the enemy, and performing many miracles, in His name, can be lawlessness, wickedness, or a violation of law. Why? How is that possible? What determines whether an act is authorized or unauthorized? Please understand, our relationship

with God has never been, and never will be, about what we do, it has always only been about, and always will be about, faith and His life in ours. This is why Paul says:

***1 Corinthians 13:1-3***

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

The fruit is the proof, not about the deeds. Remember, great works of God and fruit are two different things. One is what He does and the other is what He is. The fruit of the Spirit is love because God is love (***1 John 4:8, 16***). Therefore, one must bear the evidence of His life in theirs—the fruit of love—if they truly belong to God. This is why Jesus makes it clear that “he who now does and continues to do the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter” the Kingdom (it is rendered in the *present active participle*). This is clearly not the same as those who do great things for the Kingdom. But you might ask, if God used these people to touch and change the lives of others; wasn't that, by definition, His will? After all, He is the Lord; and we have learned that nothing happens absent His direction, for the Father appoints each man's work (***John 3:27***). Good question. However, when it comes to the “will” of

the Father, Jesus has revealed His will for our lives in no uncertain terms. On His part, He may perform great deeds through people enacting His “will” on a far larger plane than we could ever understand, using whomever He wants; but in terms of us and our willingness to now and continually do His will, Jesus says:

***John 6:35-40***

... "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me {PAI}, and yet do not believe {PAI}. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. **For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life**, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who now beholds and continues to behold the Son and now believes and continues to believe in Him {may now } have eternal life, and that is a statement of fact. I inserted now and continues because “beholds” and “believes” are rendered in the *present active participle*. I also inserted “may now” for “will” because it is rendered in the *present active subjunctive*.

***Behold:*** The Father’s will is that we now and continually see the Son for who He

is, the Lord our God Almighty. **Believe:** The Father's will is that we now and continually bet our lives on His **Name**, actively believing the truth. Thus, it does not matter if God uses you to enact His will, all that matters is if you now and continually do His will: behold and believe. And when you now and continually behold and believe in the Son, you will walk in the same manner as He walked. This is one of those key indicators mentioned in **1 John 2:5-6**. Thus, like Jesus you will only do what the Father tells you to do, you only say what the Father tells you to say, and you will only go where the Father tells you to go (**John 5:19-20, 36; 10:31-21, 37-38; 17:4, 6-9; 12:48-50; 14:10; Luke 19:1-7; John 4:3-6**). Your food and your very life will be doing the will of our Father (**John 4:34**), for you will be convinced that you can do nothing on your own initiative and therefore you will seek only the will of your Father (**John 5:30**). It is an amazing way to live and the only way you can know you have entered through the narrow gate.

Can you imagine, after a life filled with doing so much for God believing you must belong to His Kingdom, to hear: "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." Those have to be some of the most harrowing words in the Bible. The opportunity for delusion in the realm of Christianity is so great given the weakness of our *flesh* and our sick and twisted desire to please God by doing His great works. This is why those who truly behold and believe in the Son let the Word of God be their ultimate authority—the only plumb line for their life. They don't ignore what He says, but they search these matters out until they come to know His meaning and His truth as it is clearly revealed all across the Scriptures. And when they understand what He says, they bet their lives on the truth. This is how a true child of God lives.

Tonight, you have been presented with a plumb line. Are you going to be one who lives in obedience to His Word or your word? Will you continue to want the Word to say or mean what you want or will you let God speak for Himself and let it be authoritative over every aspect of your life. The implications of the passage we studied tonight are radical and extreme and speaks to millions across the realms of Christianity. Will you now and continually behold the Son and believe? Your destiny depends upon it. Do not be seduced and deluded by the great deeds God does through you; rather behold and believe and you will love. Then you will know for certain that you belong to God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And instead of hearing, "Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness;" you will hear, "Enter into the joy of your Master."

Let's Pray