

The Kingdom Belongs To...: Part 3

Enter into the joy of your Master. Those are some of the most beautiful words. Words I desire to hear; and I know I will hear them spoken over my life. Whereas, “I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” have to be some of the most harrowing words ever spoken by the Lord. We have been studying “The Kingdom Belongs to...” because the Lord wants us to know the difference between those who are truly citizens of the Kingdom of God and those whom He does not really know, notwithstanding the fact that they cry out “Lord, Lord” and have done so much in this world in the Name of Jesus. Remember, **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 means that there are many people who will try to enter through the narrow gate, in fact, there will be many who believe they deserve to enter because of all they have done for Jesus, but as Jesus said in **Luke 13:24**, “many will seek to enter and will not be able.”

As we have discussed each week, Jesus talks about this for our safety and protection. He wants our fellowship and our intimacy to be exclusively reserved for those who call on the Lord from a pure heart (**2 Timothy 2:22**). There is wisdom in this instruction and it aligns with the instruction we studied in **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** where we were commanded to not be bound together with unbelievers—those who do not truly belong to the Kingdom of God. But this is a tough command to follow because we might not always know the difference. So last week we spent some time studying in **1 John** all of the key indicators of those who belong to the Kingdom of God. I hope you went back through those and studied them and

honestly assessed whether or not that is you.

I was asked this week an interesting questions. This person was wondering how to tell the difference between someone who does not belong to the Kingdom of God and someone who does, but is just seriously struggling. After all, if this is such an important instruction—a command we must obey—we simply need to know. The problem is that we do not have perfect vision into such things; thus, we don't want to be rash in our judgment and go around placing this sort of indictment on this person or that person. In fact that is a very dangerous thing to do, for you might accidentally damage the wheat as you search to pull out or remove the tares (**Matthew 13:24-30**). Ultimately, it is only Jesus who truly knows. However, we do need to make judgments in order to obey the command in **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** to not be bound together with unbelievers. So what does that judgment look like?

For me, this judgment is very practical. I may not be able to know who is or is not truly of the Kingdom, but I most definitely reserve my fellowship and intimacy for those who now pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, and call on the Lord from a pure heart (**2 Timothy 2:22**). I am talking about those who do the will of the Father, for they now **behold** and continue to **behold** the Son. They also now **believe** and continue to **believe** in Him (**John 6:40**). They see the Son for who He is, the Lord our God Almighty, and they believe in the Son by betting their very lives on the fact that Jesus is the Lord God Almighty, and all that flows from this reality. Honestly, it is not that difficult to determine who now **beholds** and **believes** the Son and who refuses to behold and believe. For instance, I freely give myself to people who are empowered and emboldened by humility—the desire and passion to put down and remove anything that prevents them from enjoying intimacy with

God and worshipping Him as the Lord God Almighty. Whereas, I tend not to give myself in that same way to those who are empowered and emboldened by pride, stubbornness, selfishness, and fear. Now don't get me wrong, I do my job that God has asked me to do and I most definitely shepherd and care for them as the Spirit leads, but I do not share my times of deepest fellowship and intimacy with them. That is reserved for those who now pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace.

And since it is reserved for those who "now" pursue such things (*present* tense), if those people who are empowered and emboldened by pride, stubbornness, selfishness, and fear choose to relent and now behold and continue to behold the Son and now believe and continue to believe the Son, then they will, at that time, be considered in the "now" of those who pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace. At that time, I will gladly share my intimacy and deepest fellowship with them knowing confidently that they finally chose to enter through the narrow gate and are on the road of tribulation. But until then, it is reserved. This is a way I can follow the Lord's command without accidently pulling out the wheat believing them to be a tare.

And it does not matter who you are, what you have done, or even how you have treated me or this body, if you choose to now **behold** the Son and **believe** and continue in that regard and now pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace down the narrow road of trouble, I will give myself to you. God has taught me to drop my walls of defense and to let people in not just to receive my love but to love me and know me. But if you still love your pride, stubbornness, selfishness, and fear the simple, but very hard, truth is you are unsafe. Whether you are in the Kingdom of God or not, who knows; only time will tell. Over time, you will produce the fruit of

God's *agape* love, the undeniable proof that one belongs to God, or you will not. Instead, you will produce the deeds of darkness. Thus, you will either choose to take off your rags of *flesh* and tokens of idolatry and throw them into the fire or you will embrace them and cover them with enough "Jesus" stuff that hopefully nobody notices (including you) that they are actually garments of death. Time will tell; and the character and depth of our relationship will adjust to what you choose. I know it sounds awful, but that is how it must be.

Now, I found another little surprise in my studies. I think the word translated as "pursue," in **2 Timothy 2:22**, is perhaps another play on words; just like when we discovered that the "narrow road" of **Matthew 7:14** actually meant the road of tribulation or trouble. This Greek word, "*dioko*" is used 44 times in the New Testament; 31 of those 44 times it is translated as "to suffer persecution" or "to be persecuted" (that is so not surprising); 10 times it is translated as "to follow"; and the other 3 times it is translated as to be "given to", to "press into", and "to ensue." In a sense, we can translate **2 Timothy 2:22** as follows: "Now suffer persecution, in righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." And if you think about it, there is no deeper time of communion, intimacy, and fellowship than when we suffer persecution or trouble with one another. It is how the Lord brings about the fire that purifies our lives and binds us together. This is why the Spirit says that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (**2 Timothy 3:12**). In other words, we are to be intimately bound to those who are with us on this narrow path of tribulation marked by humility; or, said another way, marked by the desire and passion to put down and remove anything that prevents us from enjoying intimacy with God and worshiping Him as

the Lord God Almighty.

Let's go back to our text in **Matthew 7:13-27** and we will pick up in **7:24**.

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."

Honestly, this has been a very difficult passage to digest. Our natural tendency is to justify our lives by all manner of intention, effort, and desire. Yet, in the eyes of God, such things are entirely meaningless. All that matters to the Father is if we now **behold** and **believe** the Son and continue to **behold** and **believe** the Son. This is the Father's will. Again, He wants you to **behold** the Son for whom He is: the Lord God Almighty. He wants you to **believe** in the Son and therefore bet your life on every little implication of this truth. This is the will of the Father; and if you want to do your own will, He will let you. But it comes with grave consequences. Jesus said, only those who do the will of the Father may enter the Kingdom of heaven (which is at hand and is now in our midst). With this in mind, it makes perfect sense why Jesus considers those who now do, and continue to do, the will of the Father His true brothers, and sisters, and mother (***Matthew 12:50; Mark 3:35; Luke 8:21***). All relationships in the Kingdom of God, even that with the Father, are established on faith, between those who behold and believe the Son.

I hope this passage has caused you to honestly stare at your life and the choices you have made and are now making. You cannot escape this spiritual reality. You are now, whether you know it or not, choosing a destiny. You will either be a fool or a wise man; and if you choose to be the fool you will have only you to blame. God gives each person a choice. You may argue with Him based on all you have done for Him and all the ways you have called out to Him, "Lord, Lord," but unless

you do the will of the Father in heaven your pleas will fall on deaf ears.

Therefore everyone who now hears these words of Mine and now acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. With “built” being in the *aorist active indicative*, this is not just talking about a past-tense occurrence, for that would utilize the *imperfect* tense as is used in **7:27**. The idea here is that the wise man never considered building his home on anything other than the rock. And being in the *indicative*, it is a statement of fact. This person, as a matter of lifestyle, from beginning to the end, chose to **behold** the Son and **believe** in the Son of God, who is our rock—our mighty boulder.

What you build upon—your foundation is of tantamount importance. In this instance, the Spirit uses the metaphor of the storm: rains, floods, and strong destructive winds. A house not built with a strong foundation, the strength of a rock, will fall when subjected to such elements. But the house that is firmly fixed on the foundation of stone will stand no matter what comes against it. We have seen the power of the rains, floods, and winds. We have seen it wipe large structures right off the face of the earth. But a house, a life, built on the Rock, Jesus, will withstand anything and everything that comes against it. Using another metaphor closer to my penchant for violent sports, a foundation or your base is the first thing you learn when you are taught to wrestle or to fight. For instance, most people when they learn to fight want to get to the action, the punching and kicking. But before they can be taught the “fun” stuff, they have to drill over and over again the most boring thing, which also happens to be the most critical. They need to learn how to establish and maintain a strong base so that it does not matter if someone kicks them, hits them, charges them, pushes them, grabs them, or shoots

in on them to take them to the ground, they can still maintain their stability and base of power in order to mount an appropriate and effective defensive offense.

When Jesus said the house did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock, He used a tense that we have not encountered before in our studies. The word “founded” is in the *pluperfect passive indicative*. The *pluperfect* speaks of a past condition that was in effect perfectly done and still remains, and being in the indicative, that is a statement of fact. If you built your life on the rock, evidenced by the fact that you now **behold** and **believe** the Son and continue to **behold** and **believe** the Son, you will stand strong regardless of what comes against you. That is just the way it is. You will literally be impervious to destruction. It is a bit similar to what the Lord said in **Proverbs 24:15-16**, “Do not lie in wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; do not destroy his resting place; for a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity.” In other words, if you build your house not on the sand of pride, stubbornness, selfishness, and fear, but on the firm foundation of the Name, you will not stumble, you will not be taken down, you will not be defeated, and you will not be crushed. What a marvelous promise. And this is why God warns the wicked man to not even try to take down the righteous.

However, some of you, as of now, could not use the *pluperfect passive indicative* when discussing the house you have built. Some of you may have a few parts of your house built on the rock, but because of your dedication and hard-fast commitment to your pride, stubbornness, selfishness, and fear, you have a big portion of your house built on sand and you are at great risk. As we have been discussing at prayer, you have refused to relent and believe that Jesus is the Lord,

that Jesus is good, and that everything He allows and directs in your life is to make you into that alien and stranger who understands that you are to have no part in the kingdom of this world but be entirely beholden to the Kingdom of God. And you are without excuse, for you have heard the words of Jesus; but you have refused to act upon them. Thus, you cannot claim ignorance or innocence; at this point it all comes down to a choice of rebellion rooted in the deepest of fears.

Everyone who now hears and now continues to hear these words of Mine (as each of you have) and does not now act and continue to act on them (both of these phrases are in the *present active participle*), will be likened or considered by God a foolish, dull, or stupid man, and that is a statement of fact (it is rendered in the *future passive indicative*), who built, as a matter of chosen lifestyle (it is rendered in the *aorist active indicative*), his house on the sand. Wow, these are some strong words, just like the words, “I never knew you, depart from me you who practice lawlessness.” God will consider you the fool. You had the opportunity to build your house on the rock, you had the time to build your house on the rock, but you chose the easier option, the faster option, and you rejected the words that you heard. Hence, the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell— and great was its fall.

According to what God told us in our studies in **Haggai**, He is soon bringing a time of great difficulty, a **shaking** so to speak, that will rock the entire foundations of our world. He said in **Haggai 2:5-7; 21-23**, “My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!’ For thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.’ ... ‘I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and

destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another.” As we studied, this shaking is of both the heavenly and earthly realms. It will impact everyone who has not built their lives upon the rock. It will have a devastating impact on not just the sea (the people of our world) but also the “dry” or those within “Christianity” who should have life in the Spirit but are dead and dried out as a result of choosing to live according to their pride, stubbornness, selfishness, and fear.

Each of you have heard; thus, each of you get to choose whether or not you will be compared to a wise man or considered by God to be a foolish, dull, or stupid individual who has no place in the Kingdom. I also want you to keep in mind that in terms of this “great fall” (using the metaphor of the house the fool built), the Bible makes it clear that before the great and final day of the Lord, there will be a great falling away. **1 Timothy 4:1-2**: “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away (or apostacize) from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron. I want you to consider this next passage in **2 Thessalonians** which deals with all that we have talked about: this road of tribulation, our willingness to now suffer persecution in righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart, and the dreadful statement, “I never knew you, depart from me all who practice lawlessness.”

2 Thessalonians 1:3-12; 2:1-4

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting,

because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God **and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.**

These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come **unless the apostasy comes first,** and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts

himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

So there is real judgment that is coming and it will include those who do not know God (even though they think they do) and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. This is horrifying. And one of the signs of this great judgment will be the apostasy, or the falling away, that is even now taking place. God has told us that the apostate church has been born.

When the winds, the rain, and the floods come, will the house you have built stand or will it get washed away? Will you be one who will endure with perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions? The only way to know is if you are now one, or quickly become one, who chooses to yield your pride, stubbornness, selfishness, and fear and now **beholds** and continues to **behold** the Son and **believes** and continues to **believe** the Son. Is He your Lord God Almighty? Is He good? Do you really believe it? Have you bet your life on it? Are you an alien and stranger? Do you really live like one, or are those just words to you? Remember, Jesus says the foolish, dull, or stupid man knows the truth, but has not acted upon the truth. He has not made the truth their own personal truth. Don't be that person, I beg you.

I want to turn now to some passages in **2 Samuel 22** where David is discussing the Rock—the Great Boulder. Maybe in His relationship with the Lord, and with all you know that David endured in His life, you can understand how great God is and choose to follow David's example believing that God is not only the Lord, your God

Almighty, but He is also more than good—unbelievably amazing good and entirely worthy of your trust. I also want you to keep in mind as we read this passage that a big piece of it is prophetic and apocalyptic. It addresses the coming shaking and the times of the end. Yes, it applied to David's own life, but it also speaks forward about our lives. This is God's way of messaging to us that if David could do it, we can do it.

2 Samuel 22:1-20

And David spoke the words of this song to the Lord in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my savior, You save me from violence. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. For the waves of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me; the cords of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, yes, I cried to my God; and from His temple He heard my voice, and my cry for help came into His ears.

Then the earth shook and quaked, the foundations of heaven were trembling and were shaken, because He was angry. Smoke went up out of His nostrils, fire from His mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down with thick darkness under His feet. And He rode on a cherub and flew; and He appeared on the wings of the wind. And He made darkness canopies around Him, a mass of waters, thick clouds of the sky. From the brightness before

Him coals of fire were kindled. The Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered His voice.

And He sent out arrows, and scattered them, lightning, and routed them. Then the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were laid bare by the rebuke of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils. He sent from on high, He took me; He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. He also brought me forth into a broad place; He rescued me, because He delighted in me.

2 Samuel 22:31-33, 47

As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the Lord is tested; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. For who is God, besides the Lord? And who is a rock, besides our God? God is my strong fortress...The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock; and exalted be God, the rock of my salvation.

This is our God. He is our rock, fortress, deliverer, refuge, and shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold, savior, and support. He is everything we need Him to be. I love it when it says, "He rescued me because He delighted in me." Everything we have ever endured in our lives is because He delights in us. Yes, enemies have surrounded us, but He rescued us and He will continue to rescue us because He is in love with us. The enemies, the pain, the trouble, it has all been necessary to

prove out His love in our lives. As for God, His way is blameless. After all, He is only fulfilling the promise He made to all of His children—the promise to make them like Himself. He promised to separate us from the kingdom of this world. He promised to purify our hearts and minds. That is why instead of turning against Him, accusing Him, and being mad at Him for all the things we don't like in our lives, we can and should trust Him just like David did. Besides, the Word of the Lord is tested; proven by the fact that He is doing everything He promised to do, just like He always does. The enemies, the pain, the trouble just happen to be the tools that are needed to convince us to agree with God that we do not need our rotten *flesh* and we are safe to throw it off and toss it away into the fire along with all our idols.

Hear now His words, act on them. Don't be the fool. **Behold**, the Son of God is the Lord our God Almighty. Believe this to be true and bet your lives on all that this means—every minute implication. He is the **Lord**. He is in control over every single teeny tiny detail of your life. He is **God**. He is eternal, the Alpha and the Omega, and therefore knows the beginning from the end. Accordingly, He knows what you need; He knows what is necessary for you. He knows it all too well. And He is the **Almighty**; thus, no one can thwart His will for your life. And since only **God is good**, you can be confident that His will, even the enemies, the pain and the trouble, is good, pleasing, and perfect and is intended to make you like the Son.

Choose now to **Believe**. He gives each person the choice. Remember, He is blameless. Be wise; don't be the fool who falls away and is washed away by the rain, the flood, and the wind. Give up your pride, stubbornness, selfishness, and fear. Be the one who stands strong and is now and continually invincible.

Let's Pray