

The Kingdom Belongs To...: Part 4

We just completed our study in **Matthew 7:13-27** which was more than intense—harrowing even. When we take the Word of God seriously and truly consider the impact of the things Jesus said, it blows my mind how so many throughout the years have chosen to ignore or conveniently skip over His Words. In **Matthew 7:24** Jesus addressed those who now and continually hear His words and chooses to now and continually act upon them and He compared them to a wise man. He said such a man will be able to withstand any trouble or tribulation which comes his way and will in effect be impervious to the storms of life. It is an amazing consequence of now choosing to act on what we have heard and what we have learned.

And previously in **Matthew 7:13**, Jesus commanded us to always, as a matter of lifestyle, choose to enter through the narrow gate. Think about that statement and connect it to the wisdom of choosing to act upon what you have heard. It means that no matter what you must face in your life, you have a choice to always approach each situation confident that Jesus is the Lord your God Almighty. That is how you always, as a matter of lifestyle, choose to enter through the narrow gate onto the road of tribulation. In the alternative, you can choose to approach each situation through the wisdom and understanding of your *flesh*, this world, your generational inheritance, or any number of other options the king of this world offers you. But take note, the wise man does not even consider approaching the events of his life through any other gate than the truth that Jesus is the Lord God Almighty. Thus, they enter into every situation through the narrow gate of faith in

Jesus Christ.

I was thinking about the vision we recently received in terms of the enemy actively digging underneath our foundation trying to get it to collapse. This attack is an attempt to get us to not choose to act upon all that we have heard and have learned about our Lord God Almighty. Accordingly, the enemy will attack the 3 basic beliefs that we must hold to in order to be found in Christ or in an abiding relationship with Christ. They will whisper in your ear that He is not really in control of all that is happening with you. They will tempt you to worry about all the things you can't control, including your tomorrow, and thereby seduce you to try and control your future. Then they will accuse God of not being good and tempt you with the thoughts that He withholds from you and steals away the goodness you could have in this life. They will tell you that you are missing out on so much opportunity; and if you would just broaden your horizons and think beyond this little church, there is so much life to be had. And once they have your attention, they will then entice you with all that this world has to offer and tempt you to covet what so many others have chosen. If they can get you to bite on any of these things, you will soon forget that you do not belong to this world and they will wrap you up tighter than a spider encases its prey in its webbing. You will look a little bit like Frodo after he was bit by Shelob, and essentially become the living dead.

Right now, this is our battle front. But we have learned and believe that Jesus is the Lord. Jesus is in control of everything all the time; and even the enemy is just a tool to accomplish His purposes in our lives. Don't believe their ridiculous lies no matter who those lies come through. We have learned and believe that only God is good. Despite what people say, there is nothing good in this life unless it comes

straight from the hand of God. For the most part, people are miserable, lonely, and desperate; and they want you to be just like them. They don't want you to have something that they cannot (or, should I say, will not) have. We also have learned and believe that we are aliens and strangers and do not belong to this world; therefore we can never find satisfaction in anything that this world offers to us. We have tried; we have believed the lies; but they have all proven empty, for we are citizens of the Kingdom of God and not the kingdom of this world.

Now we must choose to be the wise man and act upon these truths. If we do, we will be impervious to what this world throws at us. No insult, insinuation, rejection, or down right persecution will prevail. We must let these truths go so deep into our soul that we would never ever consider acting outside of these foundational truths—just like the wise man who would never ever consider building on anything other than the Rock. This means we make our choices with these foundational truths being the gate or the filter through which we process everything, no matter what it is. The enemy wants us turning inward—into ourselves. The enemy wants us to look within for our answers, for our security, for our help. If we are looking inward, we will be unaware of his attack and he will erode our foundation and feast on our *flesh*. But as we have learned, every time we look within, there is only darkness—layers and layers of darkness—with no light at all. Jesus is the light and we will only find what we are truly looking for in Him. He is our satisfaction, contentment, and our joy.

Let's continue with this discussion of the "Kingdom belongs to..." In **Matthew 7:13-27** we learned that the Kingdom belongs to ***those who do the will of the Father***. Honestly, this makes the Kingdom a very exclusive club. The Bible does not

say that the Kingdom belongs to those who go to church, who prayed the sinner's prayer, who do good for others, or even to those who travel the world preaching the gospel. Rather, it is very specific. It belongs to those who do the will of the Father—those who now and continually **behold** the Son for who He is (the Lord God Almighty) and those who now and continually **believe** in the Son thereby betting their lives on the fact that He is **El Shaddai**, the Lord God Almighty.

This leads us to another description of those to whom the Kingdom belongs. Consider the construct of this equation and the answer will be obvious. We can approach this in a Jeopardy sort of way. The clue: Now and continually **behold** the Son for who He is and now and continually **believe** in the Son. The question: "What is faith?" Yes, the kingdom belongs to **those with faith**. In this little book I read called "We Have Been Lied To," the author tried to explain that in order to live by faith we must actively believe the truth. It is kind of like an equation. Faith = Active Belief + Truth. If any part of the right side of the equation is off balance or missing, there won't be true biblical faith. You must know the truth; or, said another way, you must behold the Son for who He is—the Lord our God Almighty. Any deviation or distortion of the truth about the Son will leave you short of actual faith. You can believe all you want in a lie, but it will do you no good.

Likewise, if you know the truth, if you now and continually behold the Son for who He is, but refuse to actively believe the truth, you will also not produce faith. You may say you believe, but unless you choose to live what you believe and now and continually bet your life on the truth, it does you no good. You must actively believe the truth to produce true biblical faith. And this is so important because without any qualification **Hebrews 11:6** says that without faith it is impossible to

please God; absolutely impossible. Therefore, I do my best to remind you of this truth over and over again because I want you to consider the implications of not pleasing the Lord. It is akin to those lawless deeds that Jesus mentioned in **Matthew 7:23** where people who cried out “Lord, Lord” said they prophesied in His name, cast out demons in His name, and in His name performed many miracles. Yet, they were all lawless deeds because they were not a product of true faith.

With this truth as our foundation, I want us to look at two passages in **Matthew** that address this issue that the kingdom belongs to **those with faith**. The first is found in **Matthew 21**. This passage starts with a parable and then Jesus drills His message down and once again creates a distinct separation between those who believe they have the right to the Kingdom of God and those who possess it by faith; as I said, it is a very exclusive club.

Matthew 21:33-46

Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.” They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers? They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons."

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES"? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust. When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet.

Clearly, in this image, Jesus is the Landowner who planted a vineyard and according to *Isaiah 5:1-7* the vineyard is Israel and the people of Judah are His delightful plant. Historically, it was customary in those days for a rich man to buy some land, plant a vineyard, and then lease it out to those who would manage the vineyard and provide the landlord, as rent, his share of the grapes. It was also customary for the landowner to put a wall around a vineyard to keep it protected from predators and thieves, to dig a press for the processing of the grapes, and to build a large tower so the guardians can keep watch for any intruders, whether foxes or crooks. All of this was customary and familiar, so they really did not need all this detail added to the story. But Jesus included it so they would know He was

applying the details of *Isaiah 5:1-7* to them. In effect, He was hitting them with a double whammy. Not only did they try to supplant the owner's rights to the vineyard, they produced nothing but worthless grapes even though the Lord had placed them in an amazing fruitful land. The religious community would not have, and did not, miss His point.

Those who were assigned to tend to this vineyard refused to acknowledge that the vineyard belong to the Landlord. They wanted it for themselves. They loved the power and control that came with operating this vineyard and they did not want to share; they did not even seem to care that they produced worthless grapes. It did not matter to them that the Landlord tried multiple times to get them to honor their landlord / tenant relationship; they just refused to acknowledge his rights; and even killed the Landlord's Son believing that with the owner in a far-away country they would now get complete possession, as squatters, of the land.

Clearly, this is a reference to the long history of Israel and the way the Lord sent prophets, wise men, and scribes to the people and they just flogged them and killed them (*Matthew 23:34-36*). So finally God sent His one and only Son; and Jesus was inferring they were going to do the same thing to Him. As a result, Jesus says: "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, now and continually producing the fruit of it."

Sadly, there are so many aspects of religion that have used this passage to justify the ill treatment of Jews. They conclude that this was when Jesus in effect transferred the kingdom from the Jews to the Gentiles, and they assume that just because they say "Lord, Lord" and do all sorts of amazing things for God that they are now the new tenants of the Kingdom. But in reality, the religious leaders of all

time, whether Jew or Gentile, have not really been all that different. They have all wanted to control the vineyard and have mistreated anyone who stepped on their toes and tried to hold them accountable to the truth. They have reaped the benefit and eaten the fruit; notwithstanding the fact that all they have done from generation to generation is produce worthless grapes.

In contrast, Jesus says the Kingdom was going to be given to a people—literally in the Greek an “*ethnos*” or an ethnic group—who now and continually are producing the fruit of it. I do not believe He was making a distinction between Jews and Gentiles; rather, He was making a distinction between those with true biblical faith and those without faith. Only those who now and continually behold the Son for who He is and who now and continually believe in the Son and thereby bet their lives on the Son will produce the fruit of the Kingdom—the fruit of faith that is pleasing to God. These are the true people of God. As **1 Peter 2:9-10** says, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession ... for once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God.”

Even though the gospels are set in the middle of a Jewish experience and much of the New Testament is set in the middle of a Gentile experience, according to **Galatians 3:28-29**, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.” This idea is reiterated in **Romans 9:6-8** when the Spirit says, “For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the

children of the promise are regarded as descendants.” “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise” (***Galatians 6:16***).

Do you get the point? This “people” to whom the Kingdom is given is not identified by racial ethnicity, but by faith and faith alone. It does not matter who you are or where you come from, if you have true faith (if you now and continually **behold** and **believe**) you are a member of the Kingdom. And if you are confused at all by these passages, ***Galatians 3:7-9*** makes it clear. “Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.” Thus, from the perspective of the Kingdom of God there are only two ethnicities: Those who are by faith sons of Abraham (sons of the promise) and everyone else (sons of the *flesh*).

Jesus has taken His kingdom out of the hands of the religious—out of the hands of those who should have offered up the fruit of faith—and has chosen to give the Kingdom to a people who actually bear the fruit of faith. This is exemplified in a true story, it is not a parable, about a Roman Centurion who came to see Jesus and believing He is the Lord.

Mathew 8:5-13

And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, and saying, "**Lord**, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented." Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion said, "Lord, I am

not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.

I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very moment.

Beyond the obvious miracle, this Roman Centurion beheld Jesus for who He is, the Lord God Almighty. He recognized that everything seen and unseen was submitted to the authority of the one who is the Lord. The Centurion did not doubt; he addressed Jesus as Lord and He believed He was the Lord. This man believed so deeply that he chose to bet His life on what He had beheld. He did not need Jesus to come into his house, to touch His servant, to speak to Him, or to do any sort of medical juju, he just needed Jesus to say the word. This Centurion was confident that even through time and space this man, Jesus, could alter the physical world and the spiritual world and command all matter, visible or invisible, to obey His desires with just a word. This man's faith clearly amazed Jesus; accordingly, Jesus said, in the Greek, it has been commanded to be done for you as you have believed (rendered in the *aorist passive imperative*). The Centurion asked, "Just say the

word, and my servant will be healed.” Accordingly, Jesus said the word, and his servant was healed. Can you imagine? The Kingdom belongs to those **with faith**.

By way of a warning, the last part of this passage is about as scary as the one in **Matthew 7:23** when Jesus said to the religious people who thought they deserved to enter the Kingdom because of all they had done for Jesus, “And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me you who practice lawlessness.'” In this instance, He says in **Matthew 8:11-13**, “I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

I believe the context of this passage is not unlike that of **Matthew 21:33-46** and the story of the vineyard. Essentially, Jesus affirms the idea that there are only two “*ethnos*,” or two types of people: those with true faith and those without true faith. I also believe the phrase “sons of the Kingdom” does not just deal with the Jews who refused to believe, but it addresses all who have been called to follow God but never actually chose Jesus in return (they just think they did)—those who know the truth, involve themselves in activities which are centered on the truth, but have refused to actually bet their lives on the truth. These are those who have been called but not chosen (**Matthew 22:14**). We covered this difficult passage quite in depth when we studied the Name **Jehovah Mekoddiskem**. Oh, and keep in mind the word “chosen” as used in **Matthew 22:14** (“many are called but few are chosen”) is not a verb but an adjective. Chosen merely describes the lives of those who are sons by faith, because they chose to **behold** the Son for who He is and **believe** in the Son betting their lives on the fact that He is the Lord God Almighty.

Thus, it is not a statement, as some errantly assume, on the fairness or justice of God.

We must never be confused. The Kingdom of God has been taken away from those who think they belong, and are convinced they have a right, to the Kingdom because of all they have done for God in Jesus' name. It has instead been given to a people who now and continually are producing the fruit of it—the fruit of faith. I hope you have noticed that for true citizens of the Kingdom there is always this aspect of what they do in their now and what they continue to do every moment of their now. True citizens of the Kingdom of God are not those who have faithful “moments” with God, but those who are now and continually in God by faith. In fact, this is what it means to abide in Christ.

1 John 2:28

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

We do not want to hear the words, “I never knew you.” Nor do we want to be those “sons of the kingdom” who will be cast out into the outer darkness; for in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. We want to be those who stand in our now in complete confidence knowing that we will hear: “Enter into the joy of your Master.” The Kingdom of God belongs to those with true biblical faith, for they actively believe the truth. And this makes perfect sense, for without faith it is impossible to please God.

Now we know, the Kingdom of God 1) belongs to those who ***do the will of the Father***—also known as 2) those ***with true biblical faith***. Next week, we will learn that the Kingdom of God belongs to 3) those who are poor in spirit and humbles himself as a child.

Let's Pray