

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Entrance Into The Kingdom

by Dan Trygg

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you close off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."

Matthew 23:13

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again/from-above he is not able to perceive the kingdom of God.' ⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?' ⁵ Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God.'"

John 3:3-5

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son. ... Many are invited, but few are chosen."

Matthew 22:2,14

"Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make the invitation and selection of y'all established; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ for in this way richly will be supplied to y'all the entrance (pathway-into) into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

2 Peter 1:10-11

It is very interesting to consider the difference between the preaching about the kingdom of God in the NT, by John the Baptist, Jesus, the apostles and the early church, and how we typically have come to talk about it in our day.

They talked about it as something coming, impending, on-the-verge, here-in-your-midst; we talk about it as far-removed, at-the-end, in-the-far-distant-future.

They talked about it as a small influence, growing and expanding through the centuries, spreading out and filling the earth; we tend to think of it mostly in terms of God's heavenly reign that will come here at the end to subjugate this evil world and to install Jesus as King.

To the early Christians, the kingdom of God was at work in their world, ...they recognized it, experienced it and walked in it; to us it seems far removed, ...a future, almost political establishment.

To early believers, it was a powerful disruptive force, and people laid hold of it with ardent zeal and intense effort; to us it is a far-away, distant promise and inheritance that we simply "wait for".

When they prayed, "Your kingdom come", they were inviting the active presence and lordship of God into their present experience; when we pray that prayer, we are longing for the coming of Christ at the end of history. They were asking for the will of God to be done NOW, in their present circumstances; we tend to ask that God's plan and purpose for history come to fruition on earth as it is in heaven. We are not typically thinking about NOW.

But the way we think and talk about the kingdom can keep us from expecting it, recognizing it, or engaging in its power. We can actually steer people away from the active working of God by how we teach and talk about it, ...in effect, "shut them out" from experiencing the kingdom in the powerful way God intends, and not enter into it ourselves, ...and think that what we are experiencing is normal, and it is all that is to be expected or hoped for! Jesus said as much to the Pharisees and experts in the law of His day. *They were Bible people, but they were blind to the kingdom of God, and they were actually blocking the way from other people who were curious. Their teachings had the effect of convincing them that there was nothing there, ...or even worse, that it was of the devil.*

Jesus told another Bible teacher, "the teacher of Israel" (Jn. 3:10), that a person had to be "born from above" to even be able to perceive or see the kingdom of heaven (3:5), and unless he or she is "born of water (physical birth) and Spirit (spiritual birth)" that person would not be able to "come-in into the kingdom of God". Most of us have heard these verses all our lives as "salvation verses", but maybe there is more here. Maybe there is something practical Jesus was offering to Nicodemus, something relevant to us. Remember how the conversation began? "Rabbi, we know (knowledge-by-observation) that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (Jn. 3:2). Jesus responds to *that statement*, "Truly, truly I say to you, if ever anyone has not been born from above, he is not able to see the kingdom of God." Before we go any farther, again we must ask, **"What is the kingdom of God?" Is it a future eschatological government of God upon the earth at the end of the age, or is it the present, active, reign and rule of God at work in our world NOW?** Is Jesus talking to this devout rabbi about how to get his ticket into heaven, or is He giving him spiritual insight as to how to discern and follow the Spirit? "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (Jn. 3:8). The works Jesus was doing *were* signs of the kingdom. Jesus *was affirming* what Nicodemus said, but at the same time *challenging him to go deeper*, to really have his senses and spiritual awareness opened up, by being born from above, born of the Spirit. Basically, he was challenging him to pursue what he thought he saw that *was* God at work. This is consistent with Jesus' own *modus*

operandi in John 5:19, "...the Son is not able to do anything from Himself, except (if not) what He might see the Father doing." **If you want to come near, and engage in the kingdom, you must get involved where you see God at work. Your ability to see the kingdom starts with being born from above, by spiritual rebirth.**

In Matthew 11:12 says that **the kingdom of heaven advances forcefully**, and forceful people, people who are willing to invest themselves with eagerness and intense effort, these people "snatch it" or "forcefully grab hold of it". Luke's version is even more clear, "the kingdom of God is proclaimed-as-good-news, **and everyone enters into it by force**", i.e., by earnestness, self-sacrifice and a determined exertion of self-adjustment (Lk. 16:16). **If you want to enter the kingdom, you must be willing to change and adjust yourself to the King, His ways, and His calling.**

Last time, we talked briefly about a parable about the kingdom of God in Matthew 22. It was about a king who had invited guests to his son's wedding. They had responded affirmatively to the invitation, so when the food was prepared, the servants went to announce that all was ready, and they were to come. They all disregarded the king's summons, and went about their own interests. The king was determined to have a full house of celebrants for his son's wedding, so he sent his servants to go out into the crossroads, streets, alleys, and even the hedgerows to gather in everyone they could find, evil or good. Each one was given a festive garment by the king, so that all would be beautiful, and all the guests comfortable. When the king came in to inspect the preparations, however, he found some other fellow had come in and had paid no regard for the festive garments provided by the king. He stood out like a sore thumb, even though his clothing was nice. The king challenged him, saying, "Friend, how is it that you are here without a wedding garment?" The man had nothing to say, being clearly in the wrong. The king had him bound, hand and foot, and thrown out. The punch line was, "For many are invited (called), but few are select (chosen, favored)." **The application would seem to be that many are invited to the kingdom, but many disqualify themselves from entering or benefiting from the king's grace**, either by their unwillingness to participate, or by their self-agenda. **Those few who enter and are part of the kingdom, ...those who are the choice or select ones..., are those who have responded to and complied with the king's offer of grace and hospitality.**

Today, we are going to look at one other passage about "entrance into the kingdom" of God. 2 Peter 1:1-11 is an amazing beginning to this letter. Peter really lays it out for us. He begins with the salutation and opening statement: ²"Grace and peace be multiplied to y'all in the true-knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³All things of His power that pertain to life and good-devotion-toward-God have-been-given to us through the true-knowledge of Him, the one calling us to His own glory and manifest-power. ⁴By means of these things He has given to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that through these things you might come to be sharers of the divine nature, having escaped-away-from the corruption that is in the world by lust." **God has given us everything we need. It comes from a revelatory-true-knowledge of God. He is calling us to share in His nature, His glory and His manifest-power.** ⁵"For this same reason, bringing-to-bear all diligence, supply (or, 'provide') in your faith the manifest-power, and in the manifest-power the experiential-knowledge, ⁶and in the experiential-knowledge the self-control, and in the self-control the perseverance, and in the perseverance the good-devotion-toward-God, ⁷and in the good-devotion-toward-God the brotherly-affection, and in the brotherly-affection the *agape*-love." **In order to grow, we have to apply what God makes available to us** (cf. Phil. 2:12,13). **It is not enough to simply "have faith". In order to grow we have to add-to or supply things to our faith. This process is a step-by-step process, ...one that requires diligence and effort on our part.** ⁸"For these things being and increasing in y'all, you will not be made unworking ('idle' or 'useless') nor unfruitful in the true-revelatory-knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; ⁹for to whom these things are *not* present, he is blind and short-sighted, having forgotten the cleansing of his former sins. ¹⁰Therefore, rather, be diligent to make the invitation and selection of y'all established; for in doing these things you will never stumble. ¹¹For in this way richly will be supplied to y'all the entrance (pathway-into) into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." **If we are growing in this step-by-step process, we will not be unproductive nor unfruitful in our faith. We are not to take our invitation for granted, but make firm our status as a choice man or woman of God, by applying ourselves to growth and obedience. Finally, as we invest ourselves in this growth process, God will richly supply to us the entrance to the reign and rule of God, ...the kingdom of God.**

The kingdom of God is *not* some distant, far away place. It is the present, active, powerful influence of God's Spirit at work in our world NOW, ...in, around and through OUR lives, ...to bring the liberation and life of God into the lives and communities where the enemy has been entrenched. Where he has caused defeat, damage, shame and woundedness, Jesus is sending His people to bring good news of a great salvation, ...words of life, hope, freedom, healing and purpose. The kingdom of God is turbulent. It is sweeping across the world, disrupting "business as usual", in order to bring change and set people free to follow Jesus. God has called *us* to be resolute, determined to apply ourselves to grow, mature, develop and become filled with His life and responsive to the Holy Spirit. God has invited us to join Him in the power and advance of His kingdom. Don't hold back! Go all the way with Jesus!