

Citizenship In The Kingdom

By David Phillips

In the days of Jesus He and John the Baptist announced the coming kingdom. After the resurrection of Jesus it was being preached as a kingdom that has already come. Today the gospel of the kingdom is the good news that the kingdom has arrived and that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ no longer wait for its coming, but are conveyed into that kingdom! *“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins”* (Colossians 1:13-14). Therefore let all know that those who obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, bear His name, and walk by faith in Him become God’s holy people!

The nations of the earth pride themselves upon the characteristics that make them distinct from all other nations. Even so, the kingdom of heaven is made up of those who are distinct from all the nations of the world; its citizens are those who have left the world, set their hearts on the eternal prize, and have put their hands to do to work of their Lord and Master. Dear reader, if you truly desire to be a faithful citizen in the kingdom of heaven then take serious consideration of the words discussed in this lesson. There are many who desire the kingdom and even believe that they are either in the kingdom or will enter in to it. But Jesus warns us in Matthew 7:21-23, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”* Therefore when the gospel was preached in Acts 2 those who heard the message responded, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* (Acts 2:37). The Peter answered, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38). And so we find that all who obeyed by being baptized were added to the church by the Lord. Therefore it is written, *“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”* (Acts 2:47b). Indeed, this is the means that Jesus has given us by which we can enter into His kingdom (Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19-20).

Our entrance into the kingdom is just the beginning of our new lives. So it is that if we are to continue to be the people of God we must desire godly things, we must be patriotic for our heavenly home. Those who repent and obey the gospel have set their hand to this very task. For where we once lived as servants to sin, Jesus has now become our Lord and we His holy servants. *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death... But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness”* (Romans 6:3, 17-18).

Therefore as new citizens of this heavenly kingdom we must seek to know how to live as faithful citizens. If we are going to claim Jesus as our Lord we must learn what His will is for us so that when the end comes we may hear Him say, *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”* To help us in this endeavor we will spend the remainder of our lesson considering the parables of the kingdom.

Parables Of The Kingdom

During Jesus’ ministry He gave many parables to illustrate the nature of the kingdom as well as the characteristics of its citizens. Let us consider a few of them so that we may learn those characteristics.

The Parables of the hidden treasure and pearl of great price (Matthew 13:44-46). Though we have already introduced these two parables let us firmly understand the application that is made. As we have

noted, they depict the value of the kingdom as well as the attitude of those who find the kingdom. It is the attitude that we must note here. Many people think that they can continue to live their old lives while still being a Christian. But it is just not so. Rather, according to this parable, our old life is what we must “sell” in order to attain our treasure in heaven. If our friends can look at our life and say that they have not seen any changes then we have not fulfilled our duty in this. Because we are citizens in the kingdom we must examine our own hearts and ask, “Is that how I view my heavenly home? Am I willing to give up all in order to attain the kingdom of heaven?” Now, we may note that just because a person becomes a Christian it does not mean that they must sell all their possessions and live a life of poverty. Rather, the significance is in our need to give up all things that are contrary to or that hinder us from attaining the kingdom. We must do as Paul instructs in Ephesians 4:22, “*That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.*” Notice what we must give up, “*concerning your former conduct.*” Let us be diligent to get rid of this old man which defined our citizenship in the world so that we may grow up a new person as citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16): In this parable Jesus illustrates one of the aspects of the relationship between Christians and their Lord. The first figure we come across in the story is the owner of the vineyard. Notice what this man is doing: “*The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard*” (Verse 1). This is what Jesus is doing at this very moment through His gospel. It is true that He is seeking to save the lost. It is true that He is seeking those who desire rest for their souls. It is also true that He is seeking those who desire to be children of God and heirs of His eternal inheritance. But just as each of these depicts one aspect of the Christian’s relationship with their Lord so does this parable. As servants of God we are just as much laborers in God’s kingdom as we are His children, and saints and heirs with Christ. Jesus cuts to the heart of the matter with this parable by teaching us the nature of our duty as citizens in the kingdom of heaven. He is the landowner seeking laborers and we are the laborers! Are you laboring?

If this or any other preacher is going to fulfill his ministry then all the saints must be taught how to serve in the kingdom with love. We must love the Father as well as our neighbors through diligent and loving service. Therefore it is written, “*For God is not unjust to forget your work and **labor of love** which you have shown toward His name*” (Hebrews 6:10). Let us therefore understand that our citizenship in the kingdom requires more than our going to church once in a while. We must come to view the assembly of the saints as one of the most important activities throughout our week. Our citizenship in the kingdom of heaven requires more than our saying “I am a Christian,” but our determination to learn the life of Christ and walk as He walked. “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*” (Matthew 6:33).

The Hope Of God’s People

The goals set forth in this lesson may seem difficult for the moment, but let us not become discouraged. We are working now so that the Lord may cause growth in the kingdom. When the Lord comes in His glory and our labors are over, then we will receive to the fullest extent of our hope in God’s eternal kingdom. Therefore Paul exhorts us in Galatians 6:9-10: “*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*”

This is the promise of the kingdom. It can be yours if you are willing to come to the Lord. He is waiting.

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