

Mark 10:15 NIV - 15 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

We've already seen that we are children of our Heavenly Father, the king. But Jesus says we will not enter the kingdom if we don't receive it like a child. What childlike qualities do you think are important in receiving the kingdom? What are some attitudes that might make it difficult, or impossible to enter the kingdom?

John 3:5 NIV - 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit."

Ultimately the Holy Spirit is your guide into the kingdom. In John 3:5 Jesus refers both to being born naturally (by water) and born spiritually. Once we are born-again it is not the rules we follow that lead us into the kingdom, but the Holy Spirit. If God's Spirit lives in us and guides us, then we will surely be led into the Kingdom of Heaven.

WRAP-UP

Jesus preached the good news that the kingdom of heaven was near. He taught and modeled what it was like to live in the Kingdom. First, we must repent and turn to God. We can't get there by following rules to make ourselves look good, we must have a change of heart. In fact we must be like little children, dependent on God, trusting His power and provision. When, by faith in Christ, we are born again, the Holy Spirit living in us will be our guide into the kingdom of Heaven, where God reigns.

MEMORY VERSE

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. - Matthew 6:33 NIV

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge- Ask God to show you where you have not allowed Him to be king in your life. Do you need to set aside worries and focus on trusting His power and goodness in your life?

"The Gospel-More Than You Expected"

Made For More #2

INTRODUCTION

If you were asked to summarize the Gospel, what would you say? Jesus died for our sin. God loves you and has an amazing plan for your life. Believe in Jesus and you will go to heaven. How about, "The kingdom of heaven is near."? In the four Gospels, the Kingdom of God (or Heaven) is mentioned hundreds of times. It is at the heart of the good news that Jesus brought, but somehow, we manage to forget that. What is the Kingdom Jesus taught about and why is it important to us?

Ice Breaker

According to Wikipedia there are 15 kings in 33 monarchies currently reigning. How many countries can you name with kings?

Key Passage

From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." - Matthew 4:17 NLT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Repent, because God's Kingdom is Near

As Jesus ministered in the first century, He brought His message to people who were subject to Roman rule and Caesar was in power over their lives. So, when He declared that there was another kingdom at hand it brought hope to the people and a threat to the Romans. The Jews had heard about the good news of God's kingdom from their prophets.

Isaiah 52:7 NLT - 7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!

Undoubtedly, they looked forward to a time when this messenger of good news mentioned by Isaiah would come. Jesus was now declaring its arrival.

Matthew 4:17 NLT - From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

Jesus was not only the messenger of the kingdom, He was the king! But His message was not merely that His kingdom had arrived, He preceded that with "repent" (metanoō) which means to change your mind. In what ways do we change our minds about our sins when we repent and turn to God? How does such a change relate to God being the one who reigns in your life? Why would we be unable to enter the kingdom without repentance?

Matthew 6:31-33 NIV - 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

When we focus on the things of this world it is easy to lose sight of God's kingdom. What would you point to as evidence that God reigns in your life? What can you do to displace your worry with trust in the goodness and power of your heavenly Father?

2. Good News of the Kingdom

The kingdom of God or of Heaven is spoken of hundreds of times in the New Testament. Jesus preached on it. Paul taught about it. We can't miss the significance of this Kingdom and the fact that it is the framework of the Good News. It continues and completes God's plan for mankind that was begun in Genesis.

Genesis 1:26-28 NLT - 26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." 27 So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

From the beginning, God shared His image with mankind and gave us authority over His creation. What did God intend us to do when he made us in His likeness (v.26)? We are not only subjects of the king, but we are also his children, heirs of the king. And He calls us to rule with Him when God's kingdom is fully consummated in the future?

3. How do we enter?

At this point you may be thinking, "Fine, but how do I get into this kingdom?" Well, it isn't by the path the Pharisees took.

Matthew 5:20 NLT - 20 "But I warn you--unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!"

Don't fall into the trap of the Pharisees. They did what made them look good. But their appearance of righteousness was masking something else. What was the truth about them (Matthew 23:28)? What does Paul reveal as the way we can have a righteousness that exceeds the Pharisees? (Phil 3:9) So if you have placed your faith in Christ, you are on your way to living in the kingdom.

Matthew 23:28 NLT - 28 Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness

Philippians 3:9 NIV - 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.