

Kingdom of God Session 4: How do we enter the kingdom?

We've been thinking about the kingdom of God as God's rule over his people, which is present in the world but not yet fully here. The question we ask today is, how can someone move from the kingdom of the world into God's kingdom? Or, to remind ourselves of a parable we looked at in the last session, how does someone go from being a 'weed' to being 'wheat'?

We'll have a starter discussion before we begin on the passages and questions.

NOTE: In these passages we'll see that sometimes the question is about the 'kingdom' and sometimes about 'eternal life'. For practical purposes, these come to the same thing.

Mark 12:28–34

Jesus summarises the 10 commandments for the questioner.

- Why do you think these are these the most important commandments? What relationship do they have with the kingdom of God (v.34)?
- Jesus commends the teacher of the law as being “not far” from the kingdom (v.34). What would he need to do to enter it?

Mark 10:17–27

Jesus is starting “on his way” (v.16) to Jerusalem for the final time when the man comes to him.

- From what the man does and says in verses 16, 17 and 20, what impression do we get of him? What does he want? Why do you suppose he felt something was missing?
- In Jesus' response to the question about eternal life (vv.18–19), what has he left out? The man says he has obeyed the ones Jesus lists in v.19. So why do you think Jesus tells him to sell everything? And why won't he?
- Why do you think the disciples were so astonished when Jesus said it is hard for rich people to enter the kingdom (vv. 23,24)? What's the problem with being rich?
- The rich man may have turned away because he loved his money, but what things prevent us from following, or whole-heartedly following, Jesus? Does this continue to be true even after we commit our lives to him, and how can we better follow him?

John 3:1–15

Here we have another question from someone who wants to know how to enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus tries to lead up to the question by acknowledging Jesus' credentials, but Jesus answers his real question without Nicodemus even asking it.

- What does Jesus say here is the requirement for entering the kingdom? We are very used to the expression “born again”, but why does this puzzle Nicodemus?
- How does Jesus explain what he means? And what does Jesus mean (vv 5–8)?
- In the Old Testament Ezekiel had talked about God putting his spirit into people to give life, but Nicodemus still doesn't seem to understand (v9). How does Jesus a) confirm what he says is true and b) describe what he has come to do?
- So why do we need to be “born again”?

Mark 10:13–16

- What does it mean to “receive the kingdom of God like a child”? Are we not supposed to use adult reasoning then?
- How does this work out in our everyday lives?

Matthew 7:13–14, 21–27

- What two things does this passage say we must do in order to enter the kingdom of God? How do we do this? It is a matter of us trying very hard?
- How do we avoid being like the people to whom Jesus will say “I never knew you”?

Finally three short passages:

Acts 8:12 and 28:31, Colossians 1:13–14

- What in the Acts verses is inextricably linked with the kingdom of God?
- What is the basis on which people enter it? How has God made this possible?

So, have you found the narrow gate?

What difference practically does it make that your allegiance is to the kingdom?