

Entering the Kingdom of Heaven

'New Beginning Studies' #2 of 4 (UPDATED 8-4-17)

Read Matt. 7:21

*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.**" (NIV)*

Q: What is Jesus saying here?

- It takes more than saying the right things to enter the Kingdom; you have to do the right things!
- This is important to consider, since so many people have been taught all they have to do "to be saved" is say a prayer.

Read Matt. 6:33

*"But **seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**" (NIV)*

Q: What does "seeking something first" look like?

- It is top priority. Everything else comes second.

Q: From our first study, we know what His Kingdom is; but what is "His righteousness"?

- "Righteousness" is the Greek word "**dikaioisune**" (*dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay*), and it means **doing what God requires, and what pleases Him.**

Q: What does Jesus promise those who make "seeking His Kingdom and righteousness" their first priority?

- The King will take care of you and provide everything you need, so you are free to focus on serving Him without worrying about providing for yourself.

Read Heb. 11:6

*"And **without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**" (NIV)*

Q: What is faith?

- Heb. 11:1 "*Now **faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.**" (NIV)*
- Having faith in God means having enough confidence in Him that you trust Him to do what He says He will do.

Q: Do you believe that God exists?

Q: Do you believe He rewards those who earnestly seek Him?

Q: Do you believe He will take care of you if you seek His Kingdom and His righteousness ahead of everything else?

Read Acts 2:36-40

*“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”³⁸ Peter replied, **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”**³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”⁴⁰ **With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”** (NIV)*

Q: Peter preached the Gospel on the day of Pentecost ([Acts 2:14-36](#)). When the people heard it, they were cut to their hearts, and asked what they should do. What did Peter tell them to do?

- Repent and be baptized.

Q: What does it mean to repent?

- “Repent” is the Greek word “**metanoeo**” (*met-an-o-eh'-o*), and it means “*to make a decision for change.*”

Q: What is baptism?

- “Baptized” is the Greek word “**baptizo**” (*bop-teez'-o*), and it means “*to dip or sink; to be totally immersed or covered over.*”

Q: Peter told them to repent and be baptized so that two things could happen. What happens when you repent and are baptized?

- You receive forgiveness of your sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Q: What would happen if you only did one or the other of these two commands?

- We aren't told, so no one knows for sure; but why would anyone with a choice take a chance?
- If we are commanded to both repent and be baptized, why would we think either command was optional? Commands aren't usually optional!

Q: What is supposed to happen when you repent?

- When you repent, the way you **think**, **AND** the way you **act**, will BOTH change.
 - In [Acts 3:19](#), Peter told people they should “*repent and return*”, which means they should *change the way they think, AND head in a different direction.*
 - Paul told people they should demonstrate their repentance by their deeds ([Acts 26:20](#)).
 - When you repent, your life produces “*fruit of the Spirit*”, instead of “*acts of the flesh*” ([Gal. 5:19-23](#)).
 - When John the Baptist told people to repent, he told them to “*produce fruit in keeping with repentance*” ([Matt. 3:8](#)).

Q: What is supposed to happen when you get baptized?

- When you get baptized, you are dying to your old way of life, and being buried with Jesus, so that you can be raised up to live an entirely new life ([Romans 6:3-4](#)).
- When you get baptized, you are pledging allegiance to the King and His Kingdom, and you become a citizen of Heaven ([1Peter 3:21](#); [Phil. 3:20](#)).
- When you get baptized, you are clothed with Christ ([Gal 3:26-29](#)).
- When you get baptized, your heart is circumcised, and cut free from the old way of being human ([Col. 2:9-15](#)).
- When you get baptized, you are born again ([John 3:3](#)), and become a part of the new creation ([2Cor. 5:17](#)).

Q: What does it mean to have your sins forgiven?

- When God forgives our sins, He redeems us, and buys us back from our slavery to sin ([Col. 1:13-14](#); [Romans 6:17](#)).
- Sin is what separated us from God, and made us spiritually dead. With sin forgiven and taken away, we are reconciled to God, and we spiritually come back to life! ([Col. 1:21-23](#))

Q: What is the gift of the Holy Spirit?

- The Holy Spirit is the personal presence of God; and the gift of the Spirit is His coming to live inside you ([1John 4:4](#); [Rom. 8:9-11](#); [John 14:16-17](#)).

Q: Why is the gift of the Holy Spirit so important?

- [Eph. 1:13-14](#) *“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”* (NIV)
- The Holy Spirit is God’s guarantee that He has accepted you, forgiven you of your sins, and has an inheritance waiting for you!
- In addition, the Holy Spirit empowers us to do the work that God has created us to do in His kingdom ([Eph. 2:10](#); [1Cor. 12:4-7](#)).

What about you?

Q: You have now heard the Good News of the Kingdom. Has it cut you to the heart?

Q: Do you have the faith required to seek His Kingdom and His righteousness as your number 1 priority?

Q: Are you ready to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, to be born again, to become a part of the new creation, and to join the battle to bring Heaven to Earth?

If you’re ready to make this commitment and become part of God’s story, then don’t wait another minute! **Have someone baptize you into Jesus as soon as you can!**

But it’s very important to understand that Baptism is only the beginning; there is still so much to learn about being a part of the new creation. In the remaining 2 studies, we will look at what Jesus expects from His disciples, and how we work together as His **body**.