

SABBATH THOUGHT 2023-09-09—OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

One of the most widely recognized scriptures in the Bible also concerns me. I am referring to the time when children were brought to Jesus, likely by their parents, for Him to bless them:

MARK 10:13-16 And they brought young children to Him [*Jesus Christ*], that He should touch them: and *His* disciples rebuked those that brought *them*. 14 But when Jesus saw *it*, He was much displeased, and said unto them, [Allow] the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. 16 And He took them up in his arms, put *His* hands upon them, and blessed them.

What bothers me is that some or all of the twelve disciples tried to keep the children from coming to Jesus. Why in the world would they do that? It is not as if Jesus had ever given them any indication that He had ever refused to see anyone before. In fact, He dedicated His life and ministry to the people feeding, teaching, and healing them. He did it almost to exhaustion because there were times He really needed to be alone with His Father¹.

I wonder what was in the minds of the disciples. Did they consider children to be a waste of Jesus' time because of their age? Were they so ingrained with the ways of the priests and scribes who thought they were more important than the common people that they tried to shut them out of the Kingdom²? Regardless, it says that Jesus was “**much** displeased.” He was plainly annoyed or perhaps even angry with the disciples for keeping the children away. I will probably never know their true motives at the time but their behavior baffles me.

The parents, on the other hand, brought their children so that Jesus could “touch” them. That word in the Greek has a very intimate and caring meaning. It means to attach oneself to or take hold of in the sense of a deep relationship similar to that with a spouse. To me, the parents brought their children so they could be hugged and kissed by Jesus as He blessed them. I cannot imagine that the parents saw Jesus as a stranger or even as the Messiah and brought their children simply for a blessing. They must have followed Jesus often, listening to Him and had come to believe in Him. Maybe they even loved Him because they entrusted their precious children to His care and blessing. Perhaps they were moved by the words of Jesus when He said:

MATTHEW 18:3-5 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest

¹ Matt. 14:23; Luke 9:18.

² Matt. 23:13.

in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And **whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.**

But the point of the story is that Jesus said “of such [*that is, children*] **is** the Kingdom of God.” In other words, the Kingdom of God is MADE UP of innocent, meek, loving, and obedient children. This is exactly what is described in the Beatitudes: those who are humble, meek, righteous, merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers. These are the characteristics of the eternal children of God who will inherit the Kingdom:

MATTHEW 5:3, 5-9 Blessed *are* the **poor [humble]** in spirit: for theirs is the **kingdom of heaven.** 5 Blessed *are* the **meek:** for they shall **inherit the earth.** 6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after **righteousness:** for they shall be filled. 7 Blessed *are* the **merciful:** for they shall obtain mercy. 8 Blessed *are* the **pure in heart:** for they shall **see God.** 9 Blessed *are* the **peacemakers:** for they shall be called the **children of God.**

Many times when we think about the Kingdom of God it is in terms of the New Heavens and New Earth. We envision the city New Jerusalem descending out of heaven “having the **glory of God!**” If flesh and blood cannot look upon the glory of the face of God without perishing³, that is a glory unimaginable. The city and the streets are made entirely of transparent gold. There is a great high wall around it made of jasper with twelve gates made of pearls and an angel beside each one. The wall sits on twelve foundations made of twelve precious stones.⁴

Is this your vision at the beginning of the Kingdom of God? I hope so. I also hope you dwell upon this as the beginning of an eternity when we “rejoice with joy unspeakable and [*are*] full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8). It will be a time when “**the increase of His [Kingdom]** and **peace there shall be** no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with **judgment** and with **justice** from henceforth even **for ever.**” (Isa. 9:7).

But HOW will this be possible? I know that might sound like an odd question, but consider how it will be possible for rejoicing, joy unspeakable, and peace and justice to not just to continue but *increase* for all eternity? Simplistically, we could say that it will just simply happen because New Jerusalem “is the city of the **Great King**”⁵ who is God the Father possessing all power, might, majesty, glory, and honor! He will just MAKE it happen.

But that is not very satisfying because the answer is foundational to what the Kingdom IS. Yes, we have a vision of WHAT the Kingdom will be as portrayed in all its glory in Revelation 21. But *what* of something is many times dependent upon *who* reside in it.

Think of it this way. Few buy a house they personally designed and built. A husband looks at the practical aspects of it. To a certain extent, so does the wife but what makes a

³ Exod. 33:20.

⁴ Rev. 21:11-21.

⁵ Matthew 5:35.

house unique to the occupants is the personalization of it, usually by the wife. In other words, a wife many times makes it a home that uniquely reflects the two of them. It is her personality, tastes, and character that determine the furniture, the wall colors, pictures hanging in various rooms, family photos deliberately placed throughout, etc. that make it unique, not so much the design and construction. When someone visits, there is a certain feel about the home that mirrors the personality of the people who live there.

The same is true in some regards with the Kingdom. In all its glory, New Jerusalem will be so much more than anyone can dream or imagine. But, just like a house, New Jerusalem will reflect the character of those who will inhabit it and it will be the home of the WIFE of the Son of God! In fact, New Jerusalem is “**prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband**” (Rev. 21:2)! The preparations the Bride of Christ is making are very specific and very special because she wants to please her Husband, Jesus Christ, the very son of GOD! Her character will be PERFECT. Her ways PERFECT. Everything about her will be PERFECTION—her heart, words, beauty, humility, service, smile, joy, and dedication. She will not only be the perfect Wife, but the perfect Bride whose Husband formally presents her to His Father in a wondrous ceremony. And her home, New Jerusalem will reflect her perfection as well. Perhaps we could say that city will be made a **home**—prepared and adorned—by the Bride for her Husband, the Son of God.

When someone enters into New Jerusalem, they will know that the Wife of Jesus Christ lives there and that she is humble, meek, righteous, merciful, pure in heart, and a peacemaker. All will know the Wife of Christ when they walk through one of the twelve gates. New Jerusalem will reflect her perfect character and heart. In addition to God the Father and Jesus Christ, she is the WHO of the Kingdom! But who are those who visit the home of the Wife of Christ?

REVELATION 21:24-25 And **the nations of them which are saved** shall walk in the light of it [*New Jerusalem*]: and **the kings of the earth** do bring their glory and honour into it [*New Jerusalem*]. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

The New Jerusalem is the city of the Great King, His Son, and the Son’s Bride. If I understand Scripture, those who are saved after the firstfruits are not given residence there, but they will visit often because they will live around it. However, the residents of New Jerusalem must PREPARE as a Bride before they will take up residence there—and it all comes down to BECOMING agape love and DOING good works.

I speak about those two topics often because they DEFINE those who will be the Bride of Christ in New Jerusalem! NO ONE who has not BECOME agape love and dedicates their lives to serving others will be a part of it. That is the story of the sheep and goats (Matt. 25: 31-46).

MATTHEW 25:34-36 Then shall the King [*Jesus Christ*] say unto them on His right hand [**the sheep**], Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: **35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger,**

and ye took Me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.

MATTHEW 25:41-43 Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand **[the goats]**, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: **42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not.**

Those who fail in this life to grow in agape love and works of service are also likened to the five foolish virgins who were bereft of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 25:1-12) and were told by Jesus Christ that He did not know them. Those who fail to invest their “talents” in doing good works for others end up weeping and gnashing their teeth (Matt. 25:14-30).

The common theme of all of these parables is the success or failure of **becoming** agape love and having a heart that **desires and strives** to do good works. Those who fail in this will not receive eternity. Those who would make New Jerusalem their home are those who zealously seek to do those things NOW, in this life of flesh and blood. New Jerusalem will be one that is overwhelmingly inviting, secure, beautiful, comfortable, peaceful, generous, calm, loving, and a place where everyone desires to be and where all are welcome. Entering into THIS home, one will experience a sense of perfect love and where all who come will be served.

I think of the Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost as **Covenant Days**. Passover is the blood of the New Covenant, Days of Unleavened Bread portray having liberty from sin through partaking of God’s righteousness, and Pentecost is the seal of the New Covenant. These days are pieces of our covenant with God.

The autumn holydays—Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles—are what I call **Kingdom Days**. They portray the utter destruction of the wicked and liberation of the world from sin and the offering of eternal life. This culminates in the New Heavens and New Earth with the glorious entrance of New Jerusalem upon the scene. In other words, the beginning of the eternal Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ.

Together, these days portray the Plan of Salvation of God Most High and His Son. But to truly have a vision of the Kingdom requires having more than a mind’s eye picture of a new universe of stars and planets or a glorious city of gold. It also requires seeing that it is a place where love, peace, joy, service and generosity are the NATURE of the inhabitants. It is a place filled with children who have the perfect character of love and give service to all! And because perfect love begets more love, the Kingdom will always be ever-increasing love, joy, and peace for all eternity!

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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