

HAVING A SEAT IN THE KINGDOM

A Roman Centurion expressed faith that Jesus could just say the word and heal his servant from a distance. Jesus marveled at such great faith. But Jesus then indicated that it is this KIND of faith that will enter the kingdom.

Matthew 8:11 (NKJV)

11 And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

The Jews thought as the favored people of God they were most certainly going into the kingdom in contrast to wretched Gentiles. But Jesus said MANY Gentiles from all over the world (from the east and west) will sit down with the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) in the kingdom.

“These ‘many’ can only be Gentiles, contrasted as they are (v. 12) with ‘subjects of the kingdom.’” -**D.A. Carson**

Christ put His finger on the very thing that is necessary to get into the kingdom, and that is FAITH – faith just like that which was exhibited by the centurion. These are the ones going into the kingdom. And praise the Lord, He said there would be “MANY” of us!

And what kind of faith did the centurion have? He had a LORDSHIP faith that recognized Christ’s authority as Lord! This is the kind of faith that will get you a seat with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom.

The naming of these three patriarchs clearly ties this to a literal future kingdom. “**The kingdom of heaven**” is synonymous with “**the kingdom of God**” elsewhere. It refers to the coming kingdom in which Jesus will reign as King on the earth.

The word translated as “**sit down**” (*Gk. anaklino*) literally means “recline” as at a banquet table. In the Scripture, the coming kingdom is often presented as a BANQUET (cf. Isa. 25:6; 49:8-12; 59:19; 65:13-14; 66:12, 19; Mal. 1:11; Mt. 22:1-14; 25:10; Lk. 13:28-29; 14:15-24; Rev. 19:7-10). The kingdom is a celebration feast!

But only people of true faith in the Lordship of Christ will be there! And MANY of them will be Gentiles – much to the shock of the average Jew in the time of Christ.

“In the eyes of many Jews, one of the most significant and appealing things about the feast was that it would be totally free of Gentiles.”

– **John MacArthur**

Matthew 8:12 (NKJV)

12 But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

What a shock! The Jewish rabbis taught that they, as the chosen people, would one day eat with Abraham and the Messiah in the kingdom. They taught that this would be the experience of Jews only.

Thus, the Jews saw themselves as the sons of Abraham (cf. Mt. 3:9-10; Jn. 8:31-59) who belonged to the kingdom by right. In their minds, it was a given that they were the “natural heirs” to the kingdom because they were the chosen people. The covenants were with them, and this favor rested upon them alone.

And it really should belong to them because they, as a people group, were indeed given special kingdom promises.

For this reason, they are called “***the sons of the kingdom***”. However, as Paul says, “they are not all Israel who are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6). In Romans 2:28-29, Paul points out that being a physical Jew is not enough – God also demands a circumcision of the heart. In other words, they must truly have a repentant faith.

Unbelieving “***sons of the kingdom***” (that is Jews) will be cast out into outer darkness. The only way into the kingdom is through faith – the same kind of Lordship faith demonstrated by the Gentile centurion.

The phrase “***outer darkness***” occurs three times in the Bible – all here in Matthew (8:12; 22:13; 25:30). Each time it is preceded by the definite article referring to a definite place. More literally, they shall be cast out into “**the** outer darkness”. This is referring to the place commonly called “HELL,” where there will be continual weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Some have tried to say that “***outer darkness***” refers to the experience of believers who will be excluded from the celebratory aspects of the kingdom, but in my view, that is a tortured view (pun intended).

“The outer darkness (Mt. 22:13; 25:30) and weeping and gnashing of teeth (13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30) are metaphors for the experience of God’s judgment reserved for unbelievers.”

– *The Moody Bible Commentary*

One clear reason to think this is hell is because of the qualifier “**weeping and gnashing of teeth**,” which elsewhere is clearly identified with “**the furnace of fire**,” which depicts HELL (cf. Mt. 13:42, 50). This is not a *kingdom “experience”* but rather a being excluded from the kingdom “experience”. In Luke 13:28, Christ made it clear that those weeping and gnashing their teeth are thrust from the kingdom entirely.

Luke 13:28 (NKJV)

28 There will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves **thrust out**.

The definite articles with both “the weeping” and “the gnashing” emphasize the horror of it. Weeping indicates suffering and gnashing of teeth, despair.

Matthew 8:13 (NKJV)

13 Then Jesus said to the centurion, “**Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.**” And his servant was healed that same hour.

By the way, note that in this case the healing had nothing to do with the faith of the paralyzed servant, but rather that of the centurion. Faith healers never make that application. They always put it all on the sick person.

Jesus honored the request of the centurion based on his faith – what Christ called “great faith”. That very same hour, the servant was healed. Indeed, Christ’s Lordship authority over this malady proved to be true.

Receiving Christ as authoritative Lord is not a matter of works – rather, it is a matter of faith. 1 Corinthians 12:3 says, “***no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.***” It is the work of God that brings one to this point.

The Bible says, “***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved***” (Acts 16:31). It says it is with the heart that one believes” (Rom. 10:9-10). As our Savior Christ died for all our sins. As Lord over all, He arose the third day. A saving faith makes it personal – it personally

appropriates the truth of Christ as **my Savior and my Lord**. Have you done that? Is Christ your Savior and Lord?

Only those who truly know Christ as Lord will celebrate in the kingdom banquet. Only they will have a seat in the kingdom! Be among them!