

THE ENCOURAGER

“He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.” 2 Cor. 1:4 (The Message)



As Christians, we just celebrated the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's a time when we send cards, have elaborate dinners, dress up, and sometimes even give gifts or candy. (Notice I didn't mention those hopping things that are sometimes made of chocolate.) At any rate, it's a joyous time for Christ Followers.

Soon after that great Easter morning celebration had ended, we find that Jesus continued to appear to the apostles over a forty day period. Can you imagine what he must have said? If the apostles and followers were talking among themselves their discussion might be, "What'd he say? WHAT?" Those must have been electrifying times. Yet it's interesting to see in Acts 1:3 He talked about, "The Kingdom of God." I find it fascinating that

Kingdom Life: Kingdom Life:

the last thing Jesus spoke of was something most of us know so little about? So if you'll humor me this month, let's take a quick journey through the Gospels and find out what this kingdom of God thing is all about.

So What Is It? It's near. (Matt 3:2 and 4:17.) Near what? US! Yeah us, Luke 17:21 says, "The Kingdom is already among you." Ok, now I'm freaking you out right? You don't see it? In Mark 4:11, He explains that the Kingdom is so amazing Jesus had to use parables to explain it, because we are outsiders. (Likewise, in Luke 17:20 Jesus explains the kingdom can't be detected by visible signs.) In John 3:3, Jesus tells us we can't see the Kingdom unless we're born again. So you have to be a born-again Christian to see the Kingdom of God? Wow you guys are smart!

Born Again? Even if you've been a Christian for several years you must admit the born-again thing can be a little hard to wrap your mind around. I like to think of it as a new starting place. All of us love to chart out our own paths in life doing as we please. However, when we choose to follow Christ we have to make many adjustments. For instance, it doesn't take long before we get the message that sin keeps us out of fellowship with God and His Kingdom, (Mark 9:47.) According to Matthew 7:13, the only way into his Kingdom is taking the narrow gate (Jesus our perfect sacrifice for sin.) For many people that's where they crash and burn. Luke 13: 24 reminds us that "getting in" the kingdom is hard work and many will try to enter the narrow door and not succeed. It's narrow for a

Kingdom Life article is continued on page 2

“Humble we must be, if to heaven we go; High is the roof there, but the gate is low.”

Robert Herrick

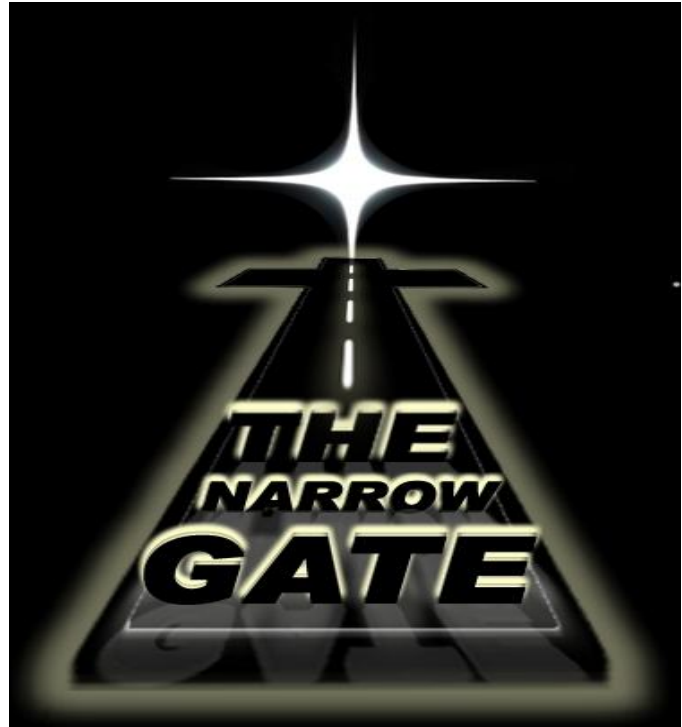
Kingdom Life Cont'd

for a reason. We can't bring all our old junk from the past life through the skinny gate. That's what Jesus' sacrifice was for. Thank God we can check old way of doing things and our sin nature at the door.

So what are some other things that keep us out of the Kingdom? Lots of scriptures state how difficult it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. Affluent and prosperous people seldom have a need for God. It becomes doubtful they would be willing to obey his commands or yield to the narrow path. Matthew 12:31 reminds us that no one gets into the Kingdom without doing what He says. What's more if we don't produce proper fruit the kingdom will be taken away from us and given to another. (Matt. 21:43)

So what do these Kingdom people look like? Jesus describes them as humble and in need of him (Matt 5:3). They are often persecuted for doing right things (Matt 5:10). A citizen's rank order is determined by both a willingness to obey and teach God's commands (Matt 5:10). The society itself will consist of people who are similar to uncomplicated children, pure, trusting, and innocent. According to Luke 13:29, it will be an interracial, multicultural place.

The best thing about this kingdom is that membership is unrestricted. Our King Jesus invites everyone to accept his sin sacrifice and become citizens. Jesus' entire life calling and purpose for his earth-walk is summed up in Luke 4:43: "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God." After He called His disciples he asked them to share in his call.



In Luke 9:2 He compels us to "Tell others of the kingdom of God and heal the sick." Is it any wonder that we are to seek the kingdom of God above everything else? (Matt: 6:33) Or, that as his disciples say in Luke 9:60 "it is our duty to tell others of the Kingdom of God."

St. Augustine once said, "We want to reach the kingdom of God, but we don't want to travel by way of death. Yet there stands Necessity saying 'this way please' Do not hesitate, man, to go this way, when this is the way that God came to you." I hope you have become a vibrant kingdom citizen and encourage many to join our ranks. The Kingdom life is unsurpassed.

Written by, Tony Gullede

THE ENCOURAGER - A MONTHLY PUBLICATION TO ENCOURAGE THE BODY OF CHRIST.

CHECK OUT MY WEBSITE FOR ARTICLES, SHORT STORIES, AND BLOG AT:

WWW.TONYGULLEGE.COM



