

Entering the Kingdom and the law of sowing and reaping

The Jews of Jesus' day, even Jesus' closest followers, viewed the Kingdom as a physical kingdom that would be inaugurated with the coming of the Messiah. The message of John the Baptist, and of Jesus, was "*repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*" Later in His ministry, Jesus revealed that God's kingdom was not a physical kingdom, but a spiritual one, and that it was already in our midst (see Luke 17:21).

Interestingly, according to Jesus, entrance into the Kingdom had little to do with theology and more do with how you treat people, especially the poor. Jesus believed that even his adversaries, the chief priests and the elders, would be entering the Kingdom, but there would be tax collectors and prostitutes entering ahead of them. In the words of Jesus to those rulers, "*Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.*"

Entering the Kingdom is something we will all be experiencing sooner or later. The term does not refer to literally entering into a physical kingdom on earth, or even in Heaven for that matter. It is a metaphor for entering into relationship with God and receiving rewards in Heaven, after death, for the good that we do in the flesh. Most of Jesus' stories and parables had to do with the accumulation of rewards in Heaven, and those rewards were based on how we treat the poor and those in need. The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus was not about theology. It was about how in the next life the tables are turned, with the poor being comforted and the callous rich being punished for their lack of concern for the poor. In the story of the separation of the sheep and goats, the Lord did not ask who prayed the sinner's prayer, but instead He asked how you treated the sick, poor and downtrodden. I believe that many so called "Bible-believing" Christians will be among those who are turned away for a season of "*age-during chastisement*" (literal translation). The judgments of God are based on how you treat people, not on how correct or incorrect your profession of faith (ie. your theology) might be.

Professing faith in Christ does not exempt you from the law of sowing and reaping. Rewards in Heaven are not based on what we believed about God while on earth, but instead on the love and compassion that we demonstrated towards those in need. Christians are not exempt from the law of sowing and reaping. We were all saved by grace on the Cross of Calvary, but the working out of our salvation, and the shaping of our characters into the likeness of Christ, are an ages-long process.

Trust me, we'll all believe in God after we die. Sooner or later, God will clue us all in on the correct theology. By then, however, it will be too late to back up the clock and live our lives again according to Godly principles. "*...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.*" (Heb. 9:27) If you have been wondering what God's will is for your life and what God would have you do to serve Him, take a look around you and see what you can do for those who are less fortunate than you. Jesus said that when you do it to them, you are doing it to Him, even if you are not aware of it at the time, even if you are not yet a Christian.