

Kingdom - cont.

man. He was close, but not saved. Did he later enter the kingdom? We don't know. But, what is important is this: Will you enter and obey today?

Not Far from the Kingdom

Many people today are brought near to the kingdom through...

- *The godly example of others.*
- *The reading of the scriptures.*
- *The acceptance of some truth.*
- *The character and teaching of Christ.*
- *The practices of Christian worship.*
- *The obedience to some Bible laws.*
- *The plans to go further.*

Many get close to the kingdom destination, but never actually enter. How unwise it is to stay where you are! The Devil doesn't mind if you get close to God's kingdom as long as you don't actually enter and be saved.

Dear sinner, you may be "not far from the kingdom." You may be "almost persuaded" to become a Christian (Acts 26:28). Why not do it today? Dear erring Christian, you may be "not far from the kingdom." You may be drifting from Jesus (Hebrews 4:1; 12:15; 2 Pet. 1:10-12). Why not return to him today? - *Chris Reeves*

- Thought of the Week -

It is estimated that 117 million people in the United States and around the world will be watching Super Bowl LVII today. These people are interested in football, but they will not get interested in the most important part of their life - their soul. They are interested in so many things, but not their soul. Why is that? They have gotten misled into thinking that other things are more important than their soul. When you finish watching the game (as I plan to), never forget what is most important.

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Wednesday: 7 pm

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Not Far From the Kingdom

And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that dared ask him any question.
- Mark 12:34 -

When Jesus entered into Jerusalem, he was tested by the Scribes and Pharisees in the Temple during his last week before going to the cross (Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 20:39-40). He was surrounded by all kinds of people and some of the religious people were dishonest (Mark 12:12,13). He knew what was in man (John 2:24-25), so he knew that kind of people that he was talking to. But, there were also people present who were sincere and seeking to learn.

One such person that Jesus interacted with was a Jewish scribe. This scribe asked Jesus, “What commandment is the first and greatest of all?” He wanted to know from Jesus what commandment out of all of the Law of Moses was the most important. (The Jews have counted 613 commandments in the Old Law. Whether they had made this count by Jesus’ time, we do not know.)

Jesus said that the “first” commandment is to love God, quoting

Deuteronomy 6:4-5. He then said that the “second” commandment is to love your neighbor, quoting Leviticus 19:18. These two commandments, Jesus said, are the greatest. Jesus gave one commandment more than what the scribe asked for.

The scribe agreed with Jesus, repeating what Jesus said and what the Law said. And then the scribe added that obeying these two commands was more important than bringing sacrifices to God. In other words, obeying God’s commands is more important than sacrificing to God alone without obedience — the very thing that many of the Jews were doing at that moment in the temple.

When Jesus heard the words of the scribe and knew how wise and spiritually perceptive and understanding this man was, he said, “You are not far from the kingdom.” His good understanding of the Old Law and application to one’s life placed him close to the God’s kingdom. He was the right kind of person that could easily enter the kingdom. Let’s take a closer look at this man.

A Searching Scribe

Who was he? This man was a Jewish scribe whose task it was to read, write, and teach the Law of Moses. He was ...

- *A religious man (v. 28)*
- *A knowledgeable man (v. 32-33)*
- *A discreet man (v. 34)*

What we can learn here is that a good man like this can still be in error and in need of saving (Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, etc.). The same is true today.

Where was he? Well, physically, he was a Jew in the Jewish nation and in Jerusalem. Spiritually, he was ...

- *Not far from, but still outside, the kingdom (v. 24)*
- *In a lost condition (Col. 1:13)*
- *In a place of decision (Mk. 10:17-22)*

This man was “almost” right, but still all together wrong if he remained where he was (Acts 26:28).

Why was he there? Why was this man near the kingdom, but not in it?

- *Was there no invitation (Mk. 1:14-15)? No, the Jews had been invited.*
- *Was there no incentive (Mt. 13:44-45)? No, the blessings of the kingdom had been shared.*
- *Was there no hindrance (Mt. 23:13)? Yes, many Jews did not want to enter.*

It is important to learn from this