

# The Kingdom of God

## Part 21

### Close Encounters of the Mind Kind

1. Review
2. Bill Hill's tribute, thoughts, notes, observations.
3. Mark 12:28-34 *One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the discussion. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" 29 Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. 30 And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' 31 The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these." 32 The teacher of religious law replied, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other. 33 And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbors as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law." 34 Realizing this man's understanding, Jesus said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.*
  - a. I wondered about this conversation, in fact, I am puzzled by the way it went. Jesus has a way of saying things that make you walk away thinking about them over and over.
  - b. On its surface, it looks like an ordinary conversation that went well. But Jesus' last reply makes me think there was more to this than meets the eye.
4. **Overview of the First Commandment:**
  - a. Jesus said this was the first of all the commandments, it was the foundational commandment.
    - i. Before Adam and Eve had any other command, the implicit command was to love their Creator God (and Father) who had created them.
    - ii. Loving God is the first commandment in regard to priority. Every other act of obedience is empty if we do not love God first. All of our obedience to the rest of the commands of God flow out of our love for Him.
      1. **Our actions reflect our relationship with God.**
      2. I can tell you what a person's God is by the way they live their life. You probably can too. You can see what they love most, and it is reflected by their actions.
  - b. If God is God, and God is all that we know God to be, then we ought to love him, to set our affections on him, let out own desire toward him, and take a delight in him; if He is God, then He must be loved with our whole heart.
    - i. God alone has the sole right to us, and therefore ought to have the sole possession of us. There is but one God, no rival must share the throne of our hearts.
5. **Jesus reply to the man:**
  - a. Jesus saw that the scribe (teacher of the law) had answered with wisdom, with rationality and understanding.
  - b. *Realizing this man's understanding, Jesus said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.*
    - i. The Greek word for understanding is "nounechos" which means "as one who has a sound mind, whose judgment is not biased by prejudice."

- ii. Most if not all of the religious rulers and teachers had no desire to be taught but acted as if they knew it all, that they had their minds made up. “don’t confuse me with the facts, I already have my mind made up.”
    - iii. It wasn’t just that this scribe had the “right answer” but it was the spirit with which he had delivered his answer that delighted Jesus.
  - c. **I often wonder why Jesus didn’t call him to become a disciple?** After all, he had invited the rich young ruler...why not this man? Could it also be that his statement “you are not far from the Kingdom of God” might have a deeper meaning? .
  - d. *"You are not far from the Kingdom of God."*
    - i. **You are close, very close...but** you aren’t “in” yet.
    - ii. **What would Jesus say about your condition?**
    - iii. How close are you to the Kingdom of God?
    - iv. I wonder how many people will end their lives and hear that statement from Jesus, when they say, “I went to church faithfully” or “I gave money to the poor” or “I prayed before meals”?
    - v. You may be one of them. You are close to the kingdom but you aren’t in!
  - e. Close is not enough. I imagine there were many who followed Jesus around who weren’t His disciples.
    - i. You get close to the kingdom and to the King...
    - ii. Close enough to hear His voice.
    - iii. Close enough to hear the laughter of the party.
    - iv. Close enough to the river of life that you get splashed by those who are swimming in it.
    - v. Near enough to the cloud of glory that you can say you saw it.
    - vi. Near enough to enjoy the music of worship.
    - vii. Near enough to feel the wind of the Holy Spirit.
    - viii. Near enough to hear the testimonies of people who were touched or used by God.
    - ix. Near enough to see a miracle or two.
    - x. Near enough to hear a rousing sermon.
    - xi. Close enough to feel the emotions of joy.
    - xii. **Near is not enough!** What an eternal tragedy to be that close but not in the Kingdom! To be a spectator but not a child of the King!
    - xiii. **Are You in the Kingdom?** If you aren’t sure, then surrender to Jesus is required.
6. *And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.*
- a. Why were they afraid to ask?
    - i. Was it shame of being exposed?
      - 1. Think about the possibility of having your heart revealed and laid bare before everyone who was looking on.
      - 2. That is what Jesus did and still does. He pries open our hearts and exposes the motives that lie at the roots of our actions and words.
  - b. Hebrews 4:12 *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*
    - i. The Greek word for sword is a sharp instrument, one that only requires a single slice to get to its goal, as opposed to hacking at the flesh by a dull instrument.
    - ii. The word of God: Jesus – was able to see into men’s hearts, he had the Father’s perspective and could perceive the heart of man. The bible says that “he knew what was in the hearts of men.”
  - c. Who was Jesus? He was the *“Word made flesh who dwelt among us.”* (John 1:4)

- i. Likewise, the word of God, spoken, read, delivered, received...is alive. Not the words on the page, but those delivered like arrows by the Holy Spirit, penetrate our very hearts, judging our intentions and our thoughts and our secrets.
- ii. What are your secrets? Why do you still resist Jesus?

7. Seeing our hearts:

- a. Have you ever had a conversation with someone where you became acutely aware that they were able to discern your heart and see past the walls you created and the masks you wore?
  - i. The first time someone did that to me was in college, when I was wearing my idealism mask. We were talking around a table and one fellow cut right through the smokescreen I had created and had me in tears in front of everyone I had been trying to impress. (Embarrassing as well). I don't have very fond memories of that experience.
  - ii. Another time was when I was presented with the gospel in college and rejected it...knowing that my heart had been pierced but that I also preferred to continue in my sin as opposed to surrender it all in exchange for the LIFE Jesus was offering.
  - iii. The next time, I was in the living room of my house late one evening, reading from the book of John, when I came across the part where it said, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." and the words pierced my heart. I felt the weight of the Presence and love of God conflicting with my self-run life that was rejecting the perfect love of Father God. I could run no more. I could reject no longer. My heart was laid bare!
- b.

8. What was missing in this scribe who answered Jesus so well?

- a. An encounter. He had an intellectual conversation with Jesus that was pretty much authentic and free from masks and clutter. But so far, it was only head knowledge. It was information, it was close to revelation, and Jesus even treated him as such.
  - i. **But God doesn't give us revelation so we can make ourselves smarter.**
  - ii. **Revelation that doesn't lead to a God encounter only serves to make me more religious.**
    - 1. Unless Scripture leads me closer to Jesus, I only become better equipped to debate with those who disagree with my way of thinking.
    - 2. God gives us revelation so we can enter into deeper encounters with Him.
  - iii. Many of us look at the Bible as a book of rules, doctrines, laws, history, lessons, etc.
    - 1. And many of us have taught or been taught from it as such.
    - 2. But it is so much more...**the bible is the revelation of God that is written so that you and I can enter into supernatural encounters with God!**
    - 3. One of the reasons we are so complacent...especially in Western Christianity, is that we have seen Bible study as an end to itself.
    - 4. We have intellectualized the bible, our faith and our experience has lagged far behind our knowledge.
    - 5. There are an awful lot of people who will be in hell who had the right answers for what saves a person but never had an encounter with Jesus Christ that transformed their lives, enlivened their spirit, and made them into a brand new creature in Christ.
- b. An encounter with God is often a power encounter.
  - i. The Holy Spirit is the dunamis (POWER) of heaven.
  - ii. Encounters with God vary from person to person according to God's design.
  - iii. But it's the lack of a power encounters that lead to a misunderstanding of God and His Word.
  - iv. The bible was not meant to be only known, it was designed to be experienced. Experience is necessary in building a true knowledge of the Word.

- v. Many people fear experience because they think their experience will contradict scripture.
- c. The excesses of a few have led many to **fear** the experiential pursuit of God.
  - i. But it is illegitimate to allow **fear** to keep us from pursuing a deeper experience with God!
  - ii. Why would you be afraid of encountering and experiencing God more?
  - iii. Might it be because you might look weird, be labeled something like Christian?
  - iv. Succumbing to fear causes a failure in the other extreme, which may be culturally more acceptable, but significantly worse in eternity.
  - v. Fear of man, fear of what others will say or think will keep many out of heaven.
  - vi. And fear keeps many heaven bound Christians from experiencing what God has for them here!
    - 1. We just completed a study on Fear on Sunday nights. You missed a very challenging study if you weren't here.
    - 2. Fear is faith in the devil's lies.
    - 3. The devil has come to steal, kill and destroy. He is a liar. And he wants to keep you from experiencing God's best for your life~!
  - vii. Joh 3:3 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."* (see: to see, become acquainted with by experience, to experience).

#### 9. Road map vs. Tour guide:

- a. Bible study is often promoted so that we will get **formulas** for living.
- b. Certainly there are **principles** that can be laid in an A to Z fashion. Principles are good, but they won't lead you on your journey. Principles are like lines in the road to help keep you in your lane, so you can prosper and be safe.
  - i. But too often a principle centered bible understanding can make the Bible into a RandMcNally road map. (hold up road atlas).
  - ii. When I treat the Bible as a road map **I live as though I can find my way through my own understanding of His book.**
    - 1. I believe this perspective of scriptures actually describes living under the law, not living under grace.
    - 2. Living under the law is the tendency to desire a list of preset boundaries, and not a relationship.
    - 3. While both the Law and Grace have commandments, Grace comes with an inbuilt ability to obey what was commanded.
    - 4. **Under Grace I don't get a road map...I get a tour guide—the Holy Spirit.**
    - 5. **How many of you have a GPS? We got ours when we went to Yellowstone. It talks to you. It displays maps. It tells you where you are and where you are going and the best way to get there. It even tells me when there is a traffic jam ahead. (find a map that will do that!).**
    - 6. **With the Holy Spirit, you get a GPS!** He directs, reveals, and empowers you to be and do what the Word says.
- c. The Bible is the absolute Word of God.
  - i. It reveals God; the obvious, the unexplainable, the mysterious, and sometimes offensive.
  - ii. It all reveals the greatness of our God. Yet the bible does not contain Him. God is even bigger than His book.
  - iii. Revival is mixed with many such dilemmas—"God doing what we've never seen Him do before, all to confirm that He is whom He said in His Word."
    - 1. We have the inward conflict of following the One who changes not, yet promises to do a new thing in us.

2. This becomes even more confusing when we try to fit that new thing into the mold made by our past successful experiences.
3. Your past experience is to inform you, not to constrain you. If you limit your future by your past, you will never grow, or your growth will be constrained.
  - a. I used to be a size 30 waist...man, if I tried to force fit this body in a size 30 pants, we would have some troubles! I can hear the ripping sounds now!
- iv. Not everyone handles the challenge of growth very well.
  1. Many hide their need to be in control behind the banner of “staying anchored to the Word of God.”
  2. By rejecting everything they are uncomfortable with, they will successfully protect themselves from discomfort, but also from the change and revival for which they’ve been praying.
- d. What is God saying to you today? He is speaking. His word is alive. Are you listening? Is your heart burning inside of you? You may need to respond to Him today! Let Him IN! Don’t be a spectator of the Kingdom. Be a child of the King! Let Jesus in today!