

Weaving the Word

Open and Shut

February 4, 2018

Welcome to where we're learning to judge rightly and stand firmly!



Do you want Jesus to lead you ... or follow you? Be honest.

Previously on Jesus' Big Day: while Jesus was having brunch with the religious rulers He said:



Woe to you experts in the law, because you have **taken away the key** to knowledge. **You yourselves have not entered**, and **you have hindered those who were entering**. ... the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely ... – Luke 11:52-53a NIV



About eight months later, He sends 72 followers in pairs to the towns in Galilee He'll visit. (Lk 10:1) **He warns the crowd to use God's Word to judge for themselves what's right**; and gives 'em one more year to produce righteous fruit. (Lk 12:57-58; 13:6-9)



Then, He sends the Twelve into battle in Judea, where they'll be hated, arrested, and flogged. (Mt 10:18-23)



Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, **[prepared by the 72 in Galilee]** teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. – Luke 13:22 NIV



This is when John the Baptist, imprisoned for almost two years, sends messengers to ask Jesus if He's the One prophesied to come. (Mt 11:1-3; Lk 7:20-20)



Jesus tells the crowd that John was the Elijah-like Messenger that Malachi said would come as the last Levitical High Priest to prepare God's way. (Mal 2:4-7; 4:5)



All the *people* ... **acknowledged [proved]** that **God's way** was right, because **they had [repented! And] been baptized by John**. But the **Pharisees and experts in the law** rejected **God's purpose [will; plan] for themselves**, **[as Levitical officials]** because they had not been baptized by John **[in preparation. Of what? The end of their rule!]**. – Luke 7:29-30 NIV

We pick up the story with the entire religious establishment (and the people too intimidated to take a stand) on one side, and Jesus (and the few willing to carry their cross) on the other.

Someone [likely one of the 72, speaking for those who've experienced the force and impact of the rulers' rejection] asked him, "**Lord, [lit. Master] are only a few people going to be saved?**" He said to them, "**Make every effort to enter through the narrow door,** [How? I thought it was by grace. It is; but we have to continue to seek the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; so we can see clearly to judge rightly and stand firmly in our convictions] **because many, I tell you, will try [lit. seek to find] to enter and will not be able to.** – Luke 13:23-24 NIV

Let's face it: **going to church doesn't mean we're going to Heaven. We can only coast for so long on someone else's convictions.** It all comes down to the deepest desire of our heart.

And, **a halfhearted effort is strong evidence of insincerity.**

There are a lot of folks whose salvation is self-delusion. One of the reasons those who seek, fail to find (besides giving up), is that **they're looking for blessings instead of boot camp,** blissfully unaware that we're in an all-out battle for our *lives*. **Not to keep 'em, but to surrender 'em fully to Christ.** And, that requires the mustering up of our *full determination*.

When King Herod imprisoned John the Baptist, Jesus declared war!

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum ... From that time on Jesus began to preach, "The time has come ... The kingdom of God is near. Repent, and **believe the good news!** for the kingdom of heaven is near." – Mt 4:12-17; Mk 1:15 NIV

Now, understand that *this was horrific news* for the priests. In fact, **this was the most aggressive move Jesus could've made!** The last prophet (and book) of the First Testament is Malachi. In it, God (who is Abba-Father *in relationship* and Lord-Master *in authority*) warns of the messenger He's sending to shut the doors.

"If then I am the **Father**, where is My honor? And if I am a **Master**, where is My reverence? Says the Lord of hosts to you **priests [the Levitical line of Aaron]** who despise **My name [Father and Master]. ... Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, [of the sacrificial system] so that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain?** [He later says it's an Elijah-like Messenger appointed by God as High Priest of Aaron's line to confront corruption, call for national repentance, and close those doors] ... **Behold, I send My messenger, [John-the-Baptist] and he will prepare the way before Me [shutting the doors to the earthly temple].** And the Lord, whom you seek, **[who dwells in the true Temple in Heaven, will open His doors and] will suddenly come [through those doors] to His temple [on earth: Jesus' body] ...** – Malachi 1:6, 10; 3:1 NKJ

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up **immediately** from the water; and **behold, the heavens were opened to Him,** and He saw the **Spirit of God** descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And **suddenly** a voice **came from heaven,** saying, "**This is My beloved Son ...**" [According to Hebrews, this is the moment Jesus (the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the *Prince of Peace*) was anointed *Great High Priest* in the eternal order of the *King of Peace*, called Melchizedek (King of Righteousness). (Heb 5:5-6; 7:2)] – Matthew 3:16b-17 NKJ

John testifies ... saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who **comes after me** [the last in Aaron’s line] has **surpassed me** [in high priestly authority] because **he was before me** [being High Priest in an eternal family].” From the fullness of his grace we have all received **one blessing** [Melchizedek’s priesthood in the Kingdom of God] **after another**. [Aaron’s priesthood in the Kingdom of Israel] For the **law** was given through Moses; **grace** and **truth** came through Jesus Christ. – John 1:15-17 NIV

And, you can only establish a new kingdom by *destroying* the old! Centuries before Jesus cried out, “The Kingdom is near!” God had warned ‘em:

The people in **this land** [Israel] have acted like **prostitutes** ... **I [God] will put an end to the kingdom of Israel** [and replace it with a new Kingdom]. ... **I will no longer forgive them** [according to the former ways]. Yet, **I will love the descendants of Judah** [and through them establish a new kingdom of priests, led by a child who’ll become the Prince of Peace and Great High Priest and the Lamb of God the Lion-King]. ... I will put an end to all **her** [Israel’s] celebrations: her annual festivals, her New Moon Festivals, her weekly worship days ... **You [Levites]** have refused to learn, so **I will refuse to let you be my priests**. ... [I will be] like a young lion to the nation of Judah. ... I am the Holy One among you, and I will not come to you in anger. ... You have known **no god besides me**. ... There is **no savior except me**. – Hosea 1:2, 4, 6-7, 9, 2:11, 4:6, 5:14, 11:9, 13:4

Jesus began to preach, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.**” – Mat 4:17 NIV

And, **it’s not about mechanical confession, but Godly sorrow.** And, **it’s not about half-hearted turning, but full repentance.** And, **it’s not merely learning the Word, but living the truth.**

Someone asked him, “Lord, **are only a few people going to be saved?**” [Actually, no. **“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few”** (Mt 9:38)]



When a rich, young Levitical ruler refuses to follow, Jesus says it’s hard for a rich man to **enter the kingdom of God**. (Mt 19:23-24)

Peter says, “Then who can be saved?” And Jesus says no worries; ‘cause, **the truth you are seeking is seeking you.**



You won’t miss it by accident; sadly, it’ll be by choice.

Then, He tells about vineyard workers hired for a huge harvest; and, **the last hired are paid first**, and **the first hired are fired and told to “go your way.”** (Mt 20:14)

[A few days after that; and just before the cross] Jesus said to them, [the chief priests and the elders who denied John’s baptism] “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are **entering the kingdom of God ahead of you** [who were hired first; but have acted like prostitutes, as prophesied]. For John came to you to show you **the way of righteousness**, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. – Matthew 21:31-32a NIV

Then He tells a story about wicked vineyard workers; and says “Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.” (Mt 21:42) That’s in Psalm 118. And, it’s addressed to *them*; and it says: “*Let the house of Aaron say, ‘His mercy endures forever.’ ... Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, and I will praise the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter.*” (Ps 118:3, 19-20)

He said to them, “**Make every effort to enter** [What? God’s Kingdom of salvation by grace through faith in His Son as your Savior and Lord. How?] **through the narrow door,** [Jesus said, “*I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved*” (Jn 10:9); “*Through Christ we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand*” (Rom 5:2)] **because many, I tell you, will try to enter** [the old way of the Law] **and will not be able to.** [“*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*” (Jn 14:6)] **Once the owner of the house** [a title Jesus gives himself while preparing to send out the Twelve (Mt 10:25)] **gets up and closes the door,** [which He did when He got up out of the water] **you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’** [But, “*He shall shut, and no one shall open*” (Is 22:22)] **“But he will answer,** [on the Day of Judgement; saying] **‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’** [Why? There’s no sincere love for Him in their heart; because, “*If anyone loves God, this one is known by Him*” (1 Cor 8:3); but, what a shock when they see who answers!] **“Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you,** [“*Yeah. Remember brunch; when I said you shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces?*” (Mt 23:13); Well, I am “*He who opens and no one shuts!*” (Rev3:7)] **and you taught in our streets.’** “But he will reply, [“*That’s the best you got? I taught in your streets!*”] **‘I don’t know you or where you come from.** [“*You should’ve opened to Me all those years I stood knocking at the door of your heart*” (Rev 3:20)] **Away from me, all you evildoers!’** [“*Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father*” (Mt 7:21)] “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the **kingdom of God,** but you yourselves thrown out. [“*They and their descendants were in charge of guarding the gates of the house of the Lord ... The gatekeepers were on the four sides: east, west, north and south*” (1 Chr 9:23-24)] People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places **at the** [marriage] **feast** [of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-9)] in the **kingdom of God.** [And with that warning, He leaves ‘em with this hope] Indeed there are those who are **last** [to be hired] who will be **first,** [to be rewarded] and **first** [on the job] who will be **last** [to enter in].” – Luke 13:23-30 NIV

But, on the Day of Pentecost, those who crucified Christ cried out for salvation; and about 3,000 entered in that day. (Acts 2:34-41) **It’s nice to know it’s okay if you’ve gotten everything wrong.**

“See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.” – Rev 3:8 NIV

Keeping His Word is about making the effort to enter in.

And, it all comes down to the deepest desire of our heart.

So, you in or you out?