

How does one get into the Kingdom of God? What must one do? And what kind of person must one be? These are the questions we shall consider in this "Bible Talk." First of all, becoming a citizen in the Kingdom of God is much like becoming a citizen in any other kingdom or nation. Those who are "born" into a kingdom are immediately considered to be citizens. Jesus said the same of His kingdom. In John 3:3, Jesus said, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In verse 5 He explained: "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This statement of Jesus refers to "baptism." For more information about this subject, review "Bible Talk" # 113, "How Can One Be Born Again?" When we are baptized into Christ, we are "born again," thus entering into the Kingdom of God by right of birth. This is a requirement for Kingdom citizenship; for without it, Jesus said we "cannot enter into the kingdom."

There are also several character traits which are necessary for Kingdom entrance. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven." An obedient heart is a requirement for Kingdom citizenship. Unless one "does the will" of the Father, he cannot "enter the kingdom of heaven." Likewise, the Lord desires a humble, submissive spirit. Jesus said, "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all." (Mark 10:15). We cannot come to the Kingdom of God on our own terms. We submit to the King and obey His will, or else we do not enter. No other sacrifice, no other offering is as pleasing to the Lord as obedience to His word (I Samuel 15:22). God considers a disobedient heart to be a rebellious heart, and sees it as insubordination (I Samuel 15:23). The Bible says, "If you . . . rebel against the command of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you" (1 Sam 12:15).

Another "Kingdom Quality" desired by God is "Righteousness." Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:20). Well . . . what kind of righteousness was held by the scribes and Pharisees? If we knew that, perhaps we could determine the kind of righteousness which exceeds it. In Luke 18:9, the Pharisees are described as those who trust in themselves that they are righteous. Any person who trusts in his own goodness has selected an inferior Savior. We cannot enter the Kingdom of God unless our standard of righteousness is greater than Self. Paul trusted in a higher standard for his righteousness. In Philippians 3:9, Paul said that he did not have a righteousness of his own, "but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." Left to ourselves, none of us are righteous (Romans 3:10). Only Jesus Christ lived without sin (Hebrews 4:15) ... and God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21). To enter the Kingdom of God, we must have a righteousness which comes through faith in Christ.

Righteousness through faith in Christ, coupled with humble submission and obedience to His word, leads one to a New Birth in the Kingdom of God. These are the requirements for Kingdom citizenship.

1. “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he _____
_____” (John 3:5).
2. What is required for Kingdom citizenship in Matthew 7:21?
3. What does it mean to “receive the kingdom of God like a child”? (Mark 10:15)
4. What do you learn about pleasing God from the story of Saul in I Samuel 15?
5. How did Jesus connect the idea of “righteousness” with Kingdom entrance? (Matthew 5:20)
6. What kind of “righteousness” did the scribes and Pharisees have? (Luke 18:9)
7. What kind of “righteousness” surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees?
(Philippians 3:9)
8. Name the four requirements for Kingdom Citizenship discussed in this lesson:

John 3:5

Matthew 7:21

Mark 10:15

Matthew 5:20