

Near The Kingdom

"And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

Mark 12:34

In Acts 2:39, the apostle Peter spoke of those people who were "afar off." Those people were the Gentiles or those who did not know God, His Son or His word. There are many who are atheists or who do not believe in God. But there are many more who possess certain traits that put them close to the kingdom. In Mark 12:28-34, the Savior spoke of a scribe who was near the kingdom. What kind of man was he? What were his traits? Can this help us find those who are close but not in the kingdom?

This scribe believed in God. Hebrews 11:6 states, *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* Belief in God is the absolute first step in coming to God. Hebrews 4:16 states that we must draw near to God, but it is impossible without belief. The scribe fully understood this when he said, *"Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he"* (Mark 12:32).

This scribe knew his duty to God. He knew that he must love God affectionately -- *"With all thy heart."* He knew that he must love God fervently -- *"With all thy soul."* He knew that he must love God intelligently -- *"With all thy mind."* He knew he must love God energetically -- *"With all thy strength."* This man had no problem comprehending what he needed to do for God. How many of us can say that we know our duty to God this well? How many of us can lay claim to the fact that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength?

This scribe knew his duty to man. Jesus commanded the scribe that he should *"love thy neighbor as thyself."* If someone loves themselves, they will work toward what is good for themselves. They will take of their body, character, name, etc. Loving one's neighbor as themselves means that one will not do their neighbor harm. Romans 13:10 says, *"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."*

This scribe possessed a proper sense of spiritual values. He was not confused and misguided. He placed his love to God first, love to man second, and moral and spiritual values of greater stature than burnt offerings and sacrifices (Mark 12:33). Many people cannot even make this simple claim.

Our society pushes us toward goals which are not conducive to the development of spiritual goals. This scribe knew where to put his values.

Because he possessed these four traits, Jesus told him that he was not far from the kingdom. He was near the kingdom, but not in it. How sad to be near the kingdom but not in it, to perish at the door, to be "almost persuaded" but to fail (Acts 26:28). The story is told of a man who ceased to dig for gold when one more stroke of the pick would have brought the ore. While proper understanding of divine things brings men to the door, obedience is necessary for entrance. *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). How close are you to the kingdom? Take the time this week to examine to see if you are in the kingdom. God calls you to be a part of it.

Kyle Campbell