

**Please explain what Jesus meant in His statement found in Luke 16:16—especially, regarding the Kingdom of God, when He said, “...and everyone is pressing into it.”**

In the context of this verse, the account shows that Jesus was reacting to the rejection of His teaching by the Pharisees (compare verse 14). In Luke 16:13, Jesus concluded a parable with this admonition, “You cannot serve God and mammon”—statement that challenged the Pharisaical practices!

Continuing in Luke 16:15-16:

“And He said to them, You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.”

Now specifically, in the first part of Luke 16:16, Jesus states, “The law and the prophets were until John.” His comment is about how God was represented to men—especially, to those of Israel, and even more directly to the House of Judah. However, the Jews of that time were not even following the law of God or paying attention to what the prophets of God taught. Jesus continued His teaching with another parable, and note the poignant indictment of this lesson:

“But he said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead”(Luke 16:31).

That indeed proved to be the case, for Jesus Christ did rise from the dead, and, still, many of the Jews rejected Him—neither did they repent and turn to

God. The proof of this is borne out in the way that the religious Jewish hierarchy fought against the disciples of Jesus who preached of His resurrection (compare Acts 5:22-42 regarding the original Apostles; Acts 7 regarding Stephen; and Acts 13:13-52 regarding the Apostle Paul).

In another account, the story of Jesus restoring life to Lazarus swept throughout the population. Even in the face of a multitude of witnesses to this remarkable miracle, the Pharisees (a dominant religious and political party in Palestine) tried to squelch the truth of the matter!

The people reacted quite differently to this raising of Lazarus from the dead:

The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: Hosanna! “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” “The King of Israel!” Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt.’ His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign” (John 12:12-18)

Note the bitter jealousy with which the Pharisees reacted to this event.

The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, “You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!”(John 12:19).

Because of their intransigent attitude, Jesus rebuked those who withstood His preaching of the Gospel:

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you

allow those who are entering to go in” (Matthew 23:13).

On the one hand, we see that there was a great resistance to what was being preached since the time of John the Baptist, but we also find that many began to turn to God and to believe the message of both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ:

“For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him” (Matthew 21:32).

Also, John himself testified against those who tried to falsely respond to his preaching:

“Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.” (Matthew 3:5-7).

Following His healing of a leper, Jesus warned the man to discreetly appear before the priest along with an appropriate offering; but this isn't what he did:

“However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction” (Mark 1:45).

After another miraculous event in which Jesus fed a large number of people, notice what followed:

“Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone” (John 6:15).

Even following His resurrection, His own closest disciples anticipated the immediate establishment of God's Kingdom: “they asked Him, saying, Lord,

will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

So we see that while the entrenched religious factions of the time fought against what both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ preached—that is, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (compare Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17)—many people were “pressing into it.” Some did it for purely political or chauvinistic reasons, and their intentions did not find fulfillment. Others heard the message and understood that they had to bear fruits worthy of repentance.” That kind of approach was magnified surrounding the events of the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given. The apostles preached the same message as that of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ—the one that pointed to the future establishment of God's Kingdom on the earth.

Here is what Peter preached to those in Jerusalem as the Church of God became established:

“But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:18-21).

In spite of opposition or even the ill-founded desires of those who sought God's Kingdom for materialistic and selfish reasons, access is only possible through the door that God has opened—a door which no one can open on their own or shut (compare Revelation 3:7-8). Jesus reveals this important key:

“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

And this:

Then Jesus said to them again, Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture"(John 10:7-9).

The lesson for Christians is to make certain that we legitimately seek God's Kingdom according to the instructions left for us. We have this warning from Jesus:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matthew 7:21-23).

Today, many, in a sense, are still "pressing into" the Kingdom of God, but as the statement from Matthew 7 reveals, they are going about it the wrong way! They have yet to repent of their sins against God, and they have to OBEY God!

Notice what we said in a previous Q&A: "Christ also refers to the fact in Matthew 11:12 that some would try to 'press into' the Kingdom of heaven in the wrong way--thinking that they do not have to keep God's law anymore (compare Luke 16:16-17)."

Please also note what was written in our booklet, "The Gospel of the Kingdom of God," on page 24:

"Consider now this passage in Luke 16:16: 'The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the Kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.' Until the prophet John came, only the Old Testament scriptures~~the~~ law and the prophets~~were~~ were known. In Luke 24:44, the entire Old Testament is summarized as the 'Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms.' The Kingdom of God had already been preached in the Old Testament, but not with such magnitude and clarity as Christ came to preach. NOW was the real

possibility to enter it~~since~~ since Christ had already qualified as King of that Kingdom, so that He could, with authority, proclaim the Kingdom of God as a future certainty for mankind. NOW it had become NEAR.

"And because of Christ's preaching, many responded by trying to get into the Kingdom. But unless they were called, they would still not know HOW. Remember, Christ told us in Luke 13:24 that many would TRY to enter it, but would not be able to. Christ warned those of His time, as well as us today, that not everyone who would just say 'Lord, Lord' to Christ, would enter the Kingdom of God, but only the person 'who does the will of My Father in heaven.' (Matt. 7:21)

"This same thought is expressed in Luke 16:16: Everyone wants to desperately enter the Kingdom of God. But what does Christ tell us in verse 17: 'And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.' In other words, if you want to enter into eternal life, keep the commandments. Only those who do the will of the Father, which is, to keep the commandments of God, will enter the Kingdom of God. And now Christ continues to give us an example of such a commandment to be kept, in verse 18: 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.'

"You shall not commit adultery' is one of the commandments that we are to keep. And divorcing someone for any other than Biblical reasons and then marrying again, is a violation of the law against adultery. In order to enter the Kingdom of God, in order to be part of the Kingdom of God, we must keep God's Law. It is the SAME Law, as we are told in Luke 16:16, that had already been preached up until the time of John the Baptist. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the Law to fail."

Also consider the truth that Paul wrote about, when he stated: Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption"(1 Corinthians 15:50). As he explains throughout this chapter,

physical must be changed to spiritual, and that can only be accomplished through our belief in and obedience to our Savior, Jesus Christ!

Finally, let us be reminded of exactly who will inherit the Kingdom of God--those who are truly able to be "pressing into it":

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?"(James 2:5).

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