

The Ring of Power

by David Orton

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Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
Matthew 5:3

JRR Tolkien's classic, *The Lord of the Rings*, captures the essence of the kingdom quest.

Frodo Baggins, a humble Hobbit, is entrusted with the carrying of the *one ring* to the land of Mordor where he casts it into the Crack of Doom, destroying the Dark Lord and his reign forever. He thereby rescues Middle Earth, delivering it from Sauron's shadow, inheriting it as a place of freedom and justice for future generations.

Just as Frodo is chosen as the *ring bearer*, so too, the meek and the poor in spirit of this world.

But what was the significance of the *one ring*? It was the ring of power over all the other rings, and thus, over the whole of Middle Earth and all its inhabitants. Moving from the mythology to the reality, as with Tolkien's epic tale, the *ring bearers* are those who overcome the satanic seduction to become as gods (see Gen 3), who, dying to self, receive the kingdom and inherit the earth.

The foolish things

Where the great princes and warriors of men failed, a humble Hobbit succeeds. God chooses the foolish things to confound the wise. As Paul calls us to remember:

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him... Therefore, as it is written, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord".

1 Corinthians 2:26-31 NIV

The kingdom of God is not given to the worldly wise and powerful, but to the meek and poor in spirit. It is not given to those with the largest church, or the biggest ministry. Sure, there may be numerical increase under the blessing of God; nevertheless, this is not our goal, nor motive, for the Lord can save by many or by few (1 Sam 14:6). He is, therefore, not impressed by our size and is not moved by our worldly measures of success. What does move him is our trust in his ways—our refusal to lean to our own understanding (Prov 3:5,6).

This is why Jesus prayed:

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;

Matthew 11:25 ESV

So, where ever the Lord finds a child-like trust the kingdom comes. The size of our ministry is immaterial. Our prestige in the eyes of men is nothing and the condition of our heart everything.

The foolishness of the cross

This is the message of the cross—a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (1 Cor 2:18-25). It is an offence to our religious and natural thinking. The religious systems of men, rather than build on the apostolic foundation of the cross, are built on human reasoning and hubris. We think we have to have the tallest tower and the biggest city to reach God. And while we draw near to him with our lips, declaring that our building aspirations are for the kingdom, our hearts are far from him (Mtt 15:8). We are driven by the original Babel seduction—to "*make a name for ourselves*" (Gen 11:4). Our own hearts leads us astray. Whole denominations, churches, ministries and movements recklessly pursue their own expansion agendas regardless of true kingdom dynamics.

Kingdom dynamics

But as Jesus shows:

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. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

Matthew 7:21-23 NASB

Now, I used to think this scripture was about heaven and hell. I was wrong—it's about the kingdom. In referring to the kingdom of *heaven*, Matthew, as a good Jew, is driven by cultural and religious sensitivities, not by a theological position. He is showing deference to the person of God by not using his name. And so, he refers to the Kingdom of *heaven* as synonymous with the Kingdom of *God*. They are the same.

Therefore, the issue is not so much getting *us into heaven*—that's guaranteed if you are saved. These ministries are prophesying, casting out demons, and working miracles. They are not only saved but powerfully operating the gifts of the Spirit! Rather, the issue is getting *heaven into us*! This is why Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "*Your kingdom come...Your will be done on earth...*".

Only those who do the *will of the Father* will enter the fullness of the kingdom. It is possible to be saved, move in the ministry and gifts of the Spirit, but do it outside of the will of the Father for that given moment. We are familiar with doing 'bad things' outside of the will of God, but not so familiar with doing 'good things' outside of his will! These ministries in Matthew 7 were habitually operating in ministry outside of the will of the Father, driven by self-will and self-promotion.

The issue according to Jesus is one of intimacy. In saying, "*I never knew (ginosko) you*", he is not saying he was unaware of them; of course he knew them—he has all-knowledge. Nor is he saying they were not saved. In using the word *ginosko* he is saying that they were not on intimate terms with him. It is the very same word the Holy Spirit has used in the sacred text for the sexual intimacy of marriage (Lk 1:34).

The Spirit and the bride

This is why the Spirit and the bride are saying, '*Come!*' (Rev 22:17). We are being called out of our cultural ghettos of Evangelical and Pentecostal irrelevance into the kingdom—into obedience to the Father's will and intimacy with the Son. We are being called to embrace the cross and deny ourselves – to forsake self-interest – our empire building – and to walk humbly with our God.

If we do not respond, get ready for God to pass us over and use the Frodo Baggin's of this world! Over the next season we will see God raise up underground creatures like the Hobbits—underground churches, and alternative forms of worship and ministry, that don't so much move in a new *church technology*; but rather, in a new *technology of the Spirit*. They will know what it is to be humble and contrite of spirit, and thereby attract the favour of God.

The Ring Bearer

Do you have what it takes to be the *ring bearer*—to pursue the kingdom quest and destroy the *ring of power*, or will it seduce you?

This is the rub of the satanic seduction. Showing Jesus the glory of the kingdoms of this world, the devil promised it was all his if he would only bow down and worship (Mtt 4:8-10). But the *prince of this world* could find nothing in him (Jn 14:30).

John describes the love of the world as: the *lust of the flesh* (the strength of our fallen human nature in self-will and self-seeking), the *lust of the eyes* (the seduction of outward appearances and false images), and the *pride of life* (satisfaction in our own success, prestige, and position) — (see 1 Jn 2:15-17).

Now, we don't worship Satan, but we do bow at the altar of the world—in fact, we love the world! The spirit of the world answers to something in our hearts, and we are seduced. Unlike Jesus, the prince of this world does find something in us: an echo of the world spirit, the lust for image, success and power.

It is time for cleansing: to take up our cross, to cast the *one ring* into the Crack of Doom, and walk in the ways of God.

It is time to inherit the earth!

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