

WHAT WE SHALL BE
A Devotional Meditation from
Ezekiel 11:14-21; Matthew 15:24, 23:13; John 10:11-18; Galatians 3:28-29;
Ephesians 2:11-22; 1 John 3:1-3
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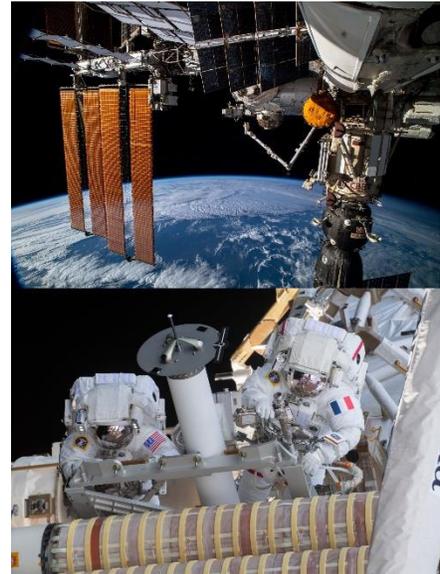
The first human expeditions into space occurred in 1961. The short flights by Russian Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin and American Astronaut Alan Shepard pale in comparison to our present capabilities, but they launched a new era for humanity. It is remarkable to consider, for example, that there has been a continuous human presence on the International Space Station since November 2000. As of this writing, the crew consists of seven space farers from four countries: the United States, Russia, France, and Japan.*

The technological advances required to put a permanent space station in orbit around the earth are amazing, but what may be more amazing is that so many nations have cooperated to build it, man it, and keep it operating. Through such cooperation, countries like Canada, Denmark, Malaysia, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates, which would be hard pressed to mount a space expedition on their own, can take part in the human endeavor to explore our heavenly neighborhood.

This is the important part: the International Space Station is a *human* endeavor. No matter the national origins of the crew members, once on board, they become part of humanity's representation in space. They were born Japanese, Korean, American, Russian, German, or Brazilian, but in space they become something new. The individual and national qualities that defined them up to that point contribute to the new and larger identity they acquire as ISS crew members.

Obtaining this new identity requires preparation and selection: preparation by each individual, and selection by their national space agencies. Yet while the candidates can prepare to meet the technical, physical, mental, and emotional qualifications, they cannot know until they arrive in space what exactly they might encounter, and how that encounter might transform them.

This is something like what we should expect in Messiah's Kingdom. John the apostle writes of this:



As the International Space Station orbits the earth (top), crew members Shane Kimbrough (USA) and Thomas Pesquet (France) work to install new roll out solar arrays (bottom). ([NASA photo, 2021](#))

* ISS Expedition 65 overview, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, accessed July 14, 2021 (https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/expeditions/expedition65/index.html).

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1 John 3:1-3 NKJV)

We have an idea what we shall become, but do we really know? Or do we really know who will be there? Think of it this way: how would the International Space Station be populated if the Russians alone decided who should be there? What if the Americans, or Japanese, or Europeans decided that only people they approved should be there? Would it then still be an *international* space station, or would it merely be another exclusive national endeavor? Would it help unite humanity, or divide us further?

There is no need to guess at the answer; we know our human story. That is why we long to see the Kingdom of Heaven manifested on earth. How sad, therefore, that we tend to exclude others if they do not meet our interpretation of the requirements for Kingdom citizenship. Messiah Yeshua addressed this issue with the spiritual leaders of His day:

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 NKJV)

Before we condemn those First Century Jewish leaders, let's consider what has happened since then. The irony is that Christianity has turned the tables by excluding the Jewish people from the Kingdom, saying that their rejection of Yeshua as Messiah has opened the way for Christians to replace them in God's redemptive Covenant. Sadly, this has not stopped with Christian treatment of Jews, but extends to our treatment of one another. Disagreement over points of doctrine and interpretation have spawned the creation of thousands of denominations and sects, all of whom have to some degree excluded others from fellowship. If only it stopped there, but it doesn't; a brief review of church history reveals the wars waged in the name of those doctrinal divisions, each claiming exclusive knowledge of the true faith, and pure allegiance to the true church. Thus, while claiming our own place in the Covenant promises given to Israel, we reject the notion that others may have places as well, reserved for them by Israel's Redeemer King.

Did we ever stop to think that the King has the final word about who becomes part of His Kingdom? Or do we deem it our duty to tell the King who is worthy of His consideration? Apparently our spiritual ancestors in Israel made the same mistake:

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, your brethren, your relatives, your countrymen, and all the house of Israel in its entirety, are those about whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'Get far away from the LORD; this land has been given to us as a possession.' Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone." Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.'" And they will go there,

and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. But *as for those* whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads,” says the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 11:14-21 NKJV)

This is New Covenant language, addressed to ancient Israel’s exiles. That means not only the Jewish exiles, but also those from other tribes, as well as the multitudes from the nations who would be brought into the Kingdom by Messiah’s redemptive work. In reading this, it seems that the criteria for Kingdom citizenship has more to do with a heart for the King and His people rather than right doctrines, interpretations, beliefs, or ethnic or national origins.

In fact, the only identity that matters in the Kingdom is identity with the King. The Messiah said He came for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and that He has other sheep who will be joined to His Israelite flock to become one with them. Paul writes about these people as “one new man,” having acquired a new Kingdom identity that incorporates and enhances their original identity – much like the identity of International Space Station crew members incorporates and enhances their own national identities.

The problem, though, is that we still want to define that new identity on our own terms. Even as the apostle writes that in the Kingdom there is neither Jew nor Gentile, we want to retain those distinctions so we can exclude the ones we deem unworthy. Perhaps it would be better if we let the King decide who is part of His Kingdom, and in the meantime treat others as if they were fellow citizens rather than foreigners and strangers. After all, it is only the King Who knows what we shall be.