

Last week I was asked to witness a passport application. That was fine—I have done it before, many times! Four forms later with some serious concentration between us, the applicant and I got it right and the application was accepted. Wow! It was quite a challenge.

Passports and all sorts of other checks are necessary in society today for valid reasons including our own protection. Sometimes we have to go through rigorous tests before we are accepted for a job or an activity. Some people need to take a test before they are granted British Citizenship.

The other day I heard a short scenario played out on the radio. A girl was preparing for her citizenship test. She had paid £50 to enter for it. She needed to get 75% in order to stay in the country so was trying out the questions on an older British woman—who had plenty to say about it all! After a whole variety of questions, she stopped, saying: “It’s not something you can be examined or tested on. It’s something that runs through you.”

I guess that whatever nationality we are there is a pride and comfort that is a natural part of us as we think of our own country. Look at the way we delight in successes, but are rather more quiet when we are defeated in football or a rugby international!

But there are other cities and kingdoms that we also consider ourselves a part of. How many people talk about being a Christian when it comes to matters of life and death? They are happy to believe that there is a place for them in the Kingdom of heaven when they die, but apart from carrying an imaginary Christian Passport, don’t really know much about it all.

The Kingdom of Heaven is a kingdom where:

- No tests of faith are set—we wouldn’t know all the answers!
- No fee to pay apart from a willingness to explore
- No family or residence qualifications are necessary
- No knowledge of the Kingdom Heaven necessary
- Not even being of sound mind and good character

It’s a free gift! But in order to possess it we need to find out more about it..

One of my favourite images of this kingdom is a picture that the apostle John describes in Revelation, the last book of the Bible. He sees a King sitting on a throne in glory. All around him are people praising, serving him and delighting in being near him. It seems a marvellous place. And there over on the right is a whole bunch of people; we don’t know who they are. They are all wearing white. And we’re told that they too are worshippers and citizens. They have been through many trials and sorrows. They have had to prove in many different circumstances that they love and serve the King. And they are now there with him. There’s no more suffering or sadness, but instead joy and delight. This is a picture of heaven!

What we are also told is that these people are ‘made clean through the blood of the lamb!’ They understand that the love and death of Jesus heals, cleanses and offers them a place prepared for them in the Kingdom of heaven. Jesus is the one who holds the whole world and all that is in it in his hands. Race or nationality or gender or.... doesn’t matter... a place in this kingdom is on offer to anyone who chooses to carry that Passport. It’s free—but it’s worth finding out a bit more about it now, before we need it.

— Pam McKellen