



Daily Verse and Comment

[Matthew 11:12](#)

(12) For from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven is taken with a *great* struggle, and *the* zealous ones lay hold on it.

[Luke 16:16](#)

(16) The Law and the Prophets were until John; from that time the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone zealously strives to enter it.

A Faithful Version

True Christianity is not a popular way of life today, and it was no different during the first century. After three and a half years of preaching, [Jesus](#) Himself had only about 120 disciples ([Acts 1:15](#)), which does not support the idea that "everyone" was trying to enter the Kingdom upon hearing [the gospel](#). [God](#) was not calling everyone then (or now), and so everyone was not "pressing" to get into His Kingdom.

In addition, the way that one enters the Kingdom is not simply through a confession or profession of [faith](#). Rather, Jesus says in [John 3:5](#) that one must be "born of water and Spirit" to enter the [Kingdom of God](#), a reference to the Father's cleansing and engendering of a person that makes him a new, spiritual creation within a physical body. It is something that only the Father does—no amount of human effort forces Him to open the door. However, once that regeneration has taken place, then we are "conveyed into the kingdom of the Son of His [love](#)," as it says in [Colossians 1:13](#). We are already a part of that Kingdom! But the bottom line is that this is an operation that happens according to the Father's will, not any human's.

Therefore, "[everyone is pressing into it](#)" not only misrepresents the underlying Greek, but it is also out of sync with what the scriptures reveal

concerning God's calling and election. A rendering that is faithful to the rest of Scripture and fits with the Greek would be something like "everyone *uses violence towards it*" or "everyone is behaving *violently against it*." This may raise other questions—to be examined shortly—but it is at least not contradictory.

Similar misconceptions need to be dealt with in [Matthew 11:12](#). A common explanation is that believers with holy zeal and earnestness are laying hold of the Kingdom with absolute determination. *Barnes' Notes* is typical: "Since 'the kingdom of heaven' or 'the gospel' has been preached, there has been a 'rush' to it. People have been 'earnest' about it; they have come 'pressing' to obtain the blessing, as if they would take it by violence."

Zeal and earnestness are absolutely needed for the sanctification process. In one context, this can even include the implication of metaphorical violence: Paul speaks of disciplining his body to bring it into subjection, so that he is not disqualified ([1 Corinthians 9:27](#)). Thus energy, determination, and [self-discipline](#) are wonderful traits—but they do not match with what Jesus describes in [Matthew 11:12](#).

One problem with this interpretation is that it puts men in the position of "taking" or "seizing" the Kingdom, another false concept. Whether we are considering our being conveyed into the Kingdom after our regeneration or inheriting it when Christ returns, in neither case is it fitting to say that we *seize it* or *take it by force*. Instead, Jesus says, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to *give you* the kingdom" ([Luke 12:32](#)). Any reward, prize, gift, or instance of grace that comes to us from God—including the Kingdom—can be received but not seized by force.

Perhaps the clearest statement of this is [Luke 18:17](#), where Jesus says, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." The kind of child He means does not violently seize anything, especially not the Kingdom. The child receives rather than takes it.

— David C. Grabbe

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