

## THE MANIFESTATION OF THE KINGDOM (3)

*Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; 1 Cor. 4:5; 3:12-15; 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 22:12*

All the verses in the Scripture Reading are related to three things: **the second coming of the Lord Jesus, the manifestation of the kingdom, and the matter of receiving a reward or suffering a loss.** Many Christians like to talk about the second coming of the Lord Jesus and also about the coming of God's kingdom. Unfortunately, many times they talk about these things according to their concepts, not according to the pure word in the Holy Scriptures. While they may speak something concerning the second coming and also something concerning the kingdom, they seldom speak something concerning the saints receiving a reward or suffering a loss. If, however, we come back to the pure Word, we will see that the above verses are the development of Matthew 16:27. In Matthew 16 there is a little seed: **"The Son of Man is to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will repay each man according to his doings."** From reading the pure word in the Scriptures, we can see something of the Lord's revelation and also of His concept.

Matthew 16:27 does not say that when the Son of Man comes in the glory of His Father, He will save everyone who believes in Him. Rather, it says that He will repay each man according to his doings. It does not say according to his faith but according to his doings. Justification is by faith, not by works. We are not saved by works but by our faith (Eph. 2:8-9). **Matthew 16:27 does not relate to the matter of salvation but to the matter of reward.** I am afraid that many Christians do not have this word reward in their Christian dictionary. We must be strongly impressed that when the Lord Jesus comes back, He will reward every man according to his doings.

### THE REWARD

The reward is not a mansion in the sky. Again, we must consider the pure word of the Bible. **To the prudent virgins the reward is the enjoyment of the wedding feast. To the faithful slaves the reward is the joy of the Lord and the ruling and authority over the nations.** Do you have the assurance that when the Lord Jesus comes, you will be rewarded? You may be so happy that the Lord Jesus is coming and that you are going to meet Him, but when you meet Him, will He reward you? I am fearful that when the Lord comes we will not be rewarded but exposed. **The reward will be based upon our doings. How we live, walk, function, and work for the Lord after we are saved is the ground for the Lord to reward us.** This concept is sown as a seed in Matthew 16:27.

Let us now read 2 Corinthians 5:9-10. In these verses the seed that was sown in Matthew 16 blossoms: “Therefore also we are determined, whether at home or abroad, to gain the honor of being well pleasing to Him. For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad.” In order to be well pleasing to the Lord, we must have an ambition to please the Lord. This is not an ambition to go to a heavenly mansion. No! These verses do not mention a heavenly mansion but rather the judgment seat of Christ. They do not say that we will appear before the judgment seat to receive our salvation. Rather, they say that we will receive something according to the things done through our body. If we have done something good, we will receive a reward. If we have done something bad, we will receive a kind of punishment.

Some might argue that because the Lord’s redemption is complete, that He died for them, they have no need to suffer any punishment. According to their concept, it is simply a matter of being saved or of perishing. If they are saved, one day they will go to heaven. If they are lost, one day they will go to hell. This is the shortsighted and mistaken concept of many Christians today.

We must come back to the pure Word of God. Second Corinthians 5:9-10 says that we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. It does not say that we must be manifested before the throne of grace. Some have mistakenly thought that the judgment seat of Christ referred to in 2 Corinthians is the same as the great white throne in Revelation 20. This is wrong. The great white throne is for the judgment of the unbelievers who are raised up after the millennium. The judgment at the white throne will not be for a reward but to determine who is saved and who will perish. That judgment relates to eternal perdition. The judgment seat of Christ mentioned in 2 Corinthians is not for the unbelievers but for the believers. It is not to decide whether they are saved or lost but to decide whether they should receive a reward or suffer a loss. The word loss is actually a weak word here. It is better to say punishment, or, according to Hebrews 12, discipline.

Many fundamental Christians do not like to consider that a Christian could be punished or disciplined at the Lord’s coming. Even those who admit that Christians need some discipline from the Lord consider that it occurs only in this age and not in the next. However, I cannot find one verse in the New Testament which indicates that God’s discipline of His children is only in this age and not in the next. On the contrary, some verses indicate that after the Lord comes back, He will deal with His children. For example, Luke 12:46-47 says, “The master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him asunder, and will appoint his portion with the unbelievers. And that slave

who knew his master's will and did not prepare or do according to his will, will receive many lashes." These verses show that **not only during this age but also after the Lord comes back, He will still deal with His children.**

Some Christians think that after they die or after the Lord comes back, the possibility of punishment or discipline will be past. They think to die is to graduate from the punishment. They must drop their concept and come back to the pure Word. They need to read 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 once more. Some may think that because the Lord is merciful and gracious, He will forgive them at that time. They may think that they can pray and repent at that time and everything will be fine. This means that they do not know the Lord's dispensation. Today is the age of the Lord's forgiveness. Once the Lord comes back, the age or dispensation of forgiveness will be over. At that time it will be too late to repent. Today if you repent and if you confess your sins, surely the Lord will forgive you. However, **if you do not repent and confess today but wait until that day when you stand before the judgment seat, it will be too late. You may try to repent and confess then, but the Lord will tell you that the dispensation, the time for repenting and confessing, is over.**

The same principle applies to unbelievers. **Today is the age of grace. Any unbeliever may repent and confess to the Lord to receive salvation. But when the Lord Jesus comes back, no one will be saved by repenting and confessing, because at that time it will be too late.** Zechariah 12:10-14 refers to the repenting Jews at the Lord's coming back. Now is the time for all of us to repent, to confess our failures and wrongdoings. Today if we repent and confess, applying the Lord's precious blood, surely He will forgive us. But not at that time. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, the dispensation of forgiveness will be over. Because the time of forgiveness will be past, you will have to suffer some punishment. Whether you call that suffering a loss or discipline or the Lord's dealing or punishment matters little. The terminology means nothing. The fact is that you have to reckon with 2 Corinthians 5:10 concerning the judgment seat of Christ.

First Corinthians 4:5 says, "Do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then there will be praise to each from God." This verse also indicates that at the time of the Lord's coming back He will judge His children. **At that time He will judge not only the outward things but also the inward motives.** He will bring into light all the hidden things, and He will reveal whatever is concealed in your heart. At that time you will either receive a reward or a kind of dealing from the Lord.

PROVED BY FIRE

Now we come to 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. These verses are very clear. “If anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble, the work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it is revealed by fire, and the fire itself will prove each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward; if anyone’s work is consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” These verses tell us that **all our works will be proved by fire. If we build with gold, silver, and precious stones, they will remain. If we build with wood, grass, and stubble, they will be consumed by the fire.** If our work abides at that time, we shall receive a reward. It does not say that we shall receive salvation but a reward. In addition to our salvation, we shall receive a reward. Furthermore, it does not say that if a man’s work is consumed, he will perish. It says that he will suffer loss. To suffer loss does not mean to perish. The last part of the verse says that he himself will be saved. Do not comfort yourself, however, by saying that as long as you are saved, you are okay. Do not neglect the words as through fire. What do the words as through fire mean? I do not know, but I do know that the pure word of the Scripture says that **we shall be saved “as through fire” at the Lord’s coming back.** Certainly this will not be a pleasant experience.

Do not think that these verses in 1 Corinthians apply to the Jews or that this is a dispensational matter which does not apply to the believers in Christ. Please remember this was a letter written to the Gentile believers in the city of Corinth, which was a city in Greece. This was a letter written to those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus in every place (1:2). This means that **this letter is also written to us.** We must take heed to this word. After we have been saved, we will never lose our salvation. Once God gives you salvation, it is eternal. The suffering of loss does not refer to losing salvation. Our God is not so simple. Even parents in dealing with their children are not so simple. When the children are good, they may give them some good things as a reward. When they are bad, they may punish them. If even earthly parents have this kind of wisdom, how much more wisdom does our heavenly Father have!

### RECEIVING THE PRIZE

First Corinthians 9:24-27 continues the same concept. “Do you not know that those who run on a racecourse all run, but one receives the prize? Run in this way, that you may lay hold. And everyone who contends exercises self-control in all things; they then, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible. I therefore run in this way, not as though without a clear aim; I box in this way, not as though beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest perhaps having preached to others, I myself may become disapproved.” In these verses Paul says that

he feared he would become disapproved. Does this mean that he feared he might perish? No! This simply means that **he feared he might lose the prize, the crown.** Because of his fear, he exercised discipline to keep his body under subjection. The word disapproved actually means to be rejected. This means to be rejected from the prize, not from salvation. After we have been saved, we have to run the race properly, and we have to fight the battle in the right way.

### A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Near the end of Paul's life, just before he was martyred, he had the assurance that he would receive the reward. "I am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Paul said that he was already being poured out. **This means he was ready to be offered to God as a martyr.** He realized that the time of his departure was at hand, and he had the assurance that he had fought the good fight and had finished his course. In 1 Corinthians 9 he said that he was running the race, but in 2 Timothy he said that he had finished his course. Because he had kept the faith and had run the race, he had the assurance that there was laid up for him not eternal security, nor a crown of grace, but a crown of righteousness. He was assured that the Lord Jesus as the righteous Judge would give him the crown of righteousness in that day. He went on to say that the Lord Jesus would also give such a crown to all those who have loved His appearing. In these verses Paul does not consider the Lord as the gracious Judge but as the righteous Judge. The crown of righteousness has nothing to do with our salvation. **Our salvation has been settled once and for all, even unto eternity. But whether or not we will receive a crown of righteousness as a prize depends upon how we run the race.**

### A CROWN OF GLORY

The apostle Peter also had the same concept. In 1 Peter 5:4 he says, "When the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." The crown of glory is something in addition to salvation. We have received salvation. **But whether or not we will receive a crown of glory depends upon how we conduct ourselves and how we work for Him.**

The harvest of the seed of the reward is in Revelation 22:12. "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to render to each one as his work is." The seed was sown in Matthew 16; it grew and blossomed in the Epistles, and now it is harvested in Revelation 22:12. The Lord Jesus said that He was coming not with



salvation but with a reward. Do not think that if you die or if the Lord comes back all your problems will be solved. **If you have not learned the proper lessons and if you have not matured in the Lord, you will still have problems, and the Lord will deal with you. If you do not feed on the Lord today and let Him saturate you, you will have problems when the Lord comes back; He will deal with you. You must be matured and learn the lessons either before you die or after you are resurrected.** Whether you learn today or you learn in that day is up to you. **If you learn the lessons today and you mature in the Lord today, you will be qualified to enter into the manifestation of the kingdom, the joy of the Lord. If you do not learn the lessons today, you will miss the manifestation of the kingdom because you will not be qualified to enter.** At that time you will still have to be matured, but it will be too late for entering into the manifestation of the kingdom. If a student does not study, he will not graduate. If he studies well, he will not only graduate but also receive a prize. In school if you do not pass your courses this semester, you must take the same courses next semester. Eventually, you must pass all the courses in order to graduate. I beg you to drop the concept that everything will be okay when you die, as long as you believe in the Lord Jesus. Do not think that by your death you will graduate. You still must be qualified.

According to the pure word of the Bible, we are told clearly that **we must be saturated with the Lord, and we must be matured.** If we are not matured and saturated in this age, we must be matured and saturated in the next. Although the Lord does not give us the details of how He will deal with us at that time, He does give us the clear principle. **The principle is that after we are saved we must go along with Him, enjoy Him, be saturated with Him, and be matured in Him.** If not, we can be sure that we will suffer something. We will miss something, and we will suffer something. But if we will cooperate with the Lord, when He returns, we will receive something in addition to our salvation as a prize. This will happen at the time of the manifestation of the kingdom, and this is a part of the manifestation of the kingdom. If we are not qualified, we will have no participation in the manifestation of the kingdom. If we would participate in the manifestation of the kingdom, we must live **today** in the reality of the kingdom. Only those who are **living today in the reality of the kingdom** will be transferred into the manifestation of the kingdom in that day. May the gracious Lord grant us to cooperate with Him, to let Him saturate us, so that when He comes back we may enter into the manifestation of the kingdom for the top enjoyment of Christ as a reward.