

THE TRANSFER OF THE REALITY OF THE KINGDOM INTO ITS MANIFESTATION

Scripture Reading: Matt. 24:30; 13:39b-43; Rev. 14:1-5, 14-16; 3:10; 12:5-6; Exo. 23:19a; Lev. 23:22

When the Lord Jesus returns, He will reckon with all His servants. **Those who have been faithful will be commended and rewarded**, but **those who have been unfaithful will suffer a loss and a punishment**. What the unfaithful ones had received from the Lord will be taken from them and given to others. If we are not faithful to the Lord today, when He reckons with us at His coming back, we will lose what we received as a gift from Him; we will miss the wedding feast and the joy of reigning with the Lord as co-kings for a thousand years. In addition, we will experience some discipline, some punishment. This is according to the pure word of the Lord in the Scriptures. We all must take this as a clear and sober warning to be faithful to the indwelling Christ. **If we abuse His grace today, we will suffer at His coming back.**

We have already pointed out that the kingdom has three aspects: the reality, the appearance, and the manifestation. Now we need to see that **the manifestation of the kingdom is simply the transfer of the reality of the kingdom**. In the next age, the reality of the kingdom will become the manifestation of the kingdom.

What will happen to the appearance of the kingdom? At the time of the transfer of the reality of the kingdom into the manifestation of the kingdom, **the appearance of the kingdom will be burned away**. During this present age, the reality of the kingdom and the appearance of the kingdom progress at the same time. But when the Lord Jesus comes back, His angels will bind all the tares into bundles and cast them into the fire (**Matt. 13:41-42**). The tares will have done much damage to the Lord's kingdom, and He will be very angry and disgusted with them. Therefore, **at His coming back He will deal first with the appearance of the kingdom by binding it and putting it into the fire. Then He will transfer the reality of the kingdom into the next age to become the manifestation of the kingdom.**

Now we need to see how the Lord will accomplish such a transfer. By referring once again to the chart in chapter 35, which shows the difference between the kingdom of the heavens and the kingdom of God, you can see that the kingdom of God is composed of six sections. Here **we are dealing only with the fourth and fifth sections**. In the innermost section of the fourth circle is **the reality of the kingdom of the heavens**. This circle is enclosed by another larger circle, which represents the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens. When the Lord Jesus comes back, **He will bind the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens and throw it into the fire**. That will terminate the appearance of the kingdom. While the fourth section, the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens, will be terminated, the reality of the kingdom will be transferred into the next section, **the millennium**. After being transferred there, the reality of the kingdom will become **the manifestation of the kingdom**.

REAL AND FALSE CHRISTIANS

The transfer of the reality of the kingdom into the manifestation of the kingdom **will be accomplished by the rapture of the saints**. Most Christians realize that at the end of this age the Lord Jesus will come back, and the believers will be raptured. At the time of the completion of the age, there will be two categories of Christians. There will be **the real ones**, the regenerated ones, and there will be the **false ones**, the tares. The false ones are the nominal Christians, those who are Christian in name only. These might be called the unbelieving "believers." Not only have they done much damage to the Lord's kingdom; they also have become an insult and blasphemy to the Lord Himself. **These false Christians comprise the appearance of the kingdom, which will be burned up at the Lord's coming back.**

OVERCOMING AND DEFEATED CHRISTIANS

Among the real and genuine Christians there will be a further classification. Some among these will be overcoming Christians, and others will be defeated Christians. **They are real Christians, but they are defeated. They are real Christians, but their Christian life is a failure. However, the fact that it is a failure does not mean**

they are not real Christians. Surely they are real Christians. Thus, when the Lord comes back, we may be either overcoming ones or defeated ones.

All the overcoming Christians are in the reality of the kingdom, and they are the reality of the kingdom. The defeated ones, although they are the church, the called ones, **are not the chosen ones**. Remember the Lord's word in **Matthew 22:14**: "Many are called but few are chosen." All those who are in the church have been called, but **only those who are living in the reality of the kingdom will be chosen**. When the Lord Jesus comes back, there will be these three kinds of Christians: the false Christians, the real and overcoming Christians, and the real but defeated Christians. May the Lord have mercy upon us so that **we would be neither the false Christians nor the defeated Christians** but **the overcoming ones**.

When the Lord Jesus returns, all the real Christians, both the overcoming ones and the defeated ones, will be gathered to the Lord. The Lord has a way to gather all of them, or in the words of the parable, a way to reap His crop. To reap, or gather, the wheat is to catch it away from the field. The Lord Jesus will take us away from the field, which is the world. This signifies that **all those who are real believers will be taken away from the earth**.

Matthew 13:30 reads: "Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Collect first the tares and bind them into bundles to burn them up, but the wheat gather into my barn." In this verse the Lord says that He will take the wheat into the barn. What and where is the barn? The Lord Jesus was really wise to use such a simple thing as farming to illustrate the mystery of the kingdom. We all know that the farmer does not live in the barn but in the house. **The barn is neither in the field, nor is it the farmer's home**. Rather, **the barn is somewhere between the field and the home**. It may be close to the home, but it is not the home. In this parable **the world is signified by the field**, and **the third heaven is signified by the farmer's home**. The home of the Lord Jesus is in the third heaven. What then is between the heavens and the world? The air is between them. **First Thessalonians 4:17** says that **those who are alive and remain will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**. It does not say that they will meet the Lord on the earth or in the heavens but rather in the air. The air here corresponds to the barn in Matthew 13. When we come to these matters, **we must exercise our discernment, and we must be alert**. **Do not be careless, thinking that to go into the third heaven is the same as to go into the air**. There is a great difference between the two, just as there is a great difference between the barn and the home of the farmer. The barn may be close to the home, but it is somewhere between the field and the farmer's home.

One day the Lord Jesus will come to the air sitting upon a cloud. Surely in the third heaven, where God dwells, there are no clouds. But in the air surrounding the earth, there are many clouds. "I saw, and behold, there was a white cloud, and on the cloud One like the Son of Man sitting, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, Send forth Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come because the harvest of the earth is ripe" (**Rev. 14:14-15**). Who is the One sitting upon the cloud? Surely it is the Lord Jesus Himself! And what is the sickle? This refers to the angels. The Lord Jesus will send forth His angels **to bind the tares to be thrown into the fire** and **to gather all the wheat into the barn**. **Matthew 13** says that **the wheat will be gathered into the barn**, and **1 Thessalonians 4:17** says that **we all will meet the Lord in the air**.

THE FIRSTFRUITS

Before the harvest was reaped in **Revelation 14:14**, there had been a reaping already. **Revelation 14:1** says, "I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads." According to **Revelation 14:4**, these are the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. They are standing not in the air but upon the throne, upon Mount Zion. This refers to Mount Zion in the heavens where God dwells. Thus, **the firstfruits went not to the air, that is, to the barn**, but **directly to the Father's home in the third heaven**. The harvest, however, will go into the barn, into the air.

THE MAN-CHILD

Revelation 12:5 says, “She brought forth a son, a man-child, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.” The man-child, the overcomers, will not be caught up to the air but to the throne of God in the third heaven. The harvest goes to the air, which corresponds to the barn, but the firstfruits go to Mount Zion, to the throne of God, which corresponds to the farmer’s home. The man-child is also raptured to the throne.

THE OLD TESTAMENT TYPE

The Old Testament presents a clear type of this principle in **Exodus 23:19**. There it says that the firstfruits of the ground shall be brought into the house of Jehovah your God. The firstfruits do not go into the barn but directly into God’s house. This indicates that the firstfruits are for the satisfaction of the Father. By this we can see that the rapture of the Christians will not occur only at one time. First there is the rapture of the firstfruits, and then there is the rapture of the harvest. The firstfruits will be raptured to the third heaven, but the harvest will be raptured to the air.

THE TIME OF THE RAPTURE OF THE MAN-CHILD

According to **Revelation 12:5-6**, after the rapture of the man-child, that is, after the overcomers have been caught up to the third heaven, there will still be another thousand two hundred and sixty days or three and a half years. Most Bible students realize that these three and a half years will be the second half of the last week mentioned in **Daniel 9**. At the end of **Daniel 9**, there are seventy weeks. First, there are seven weeks plus sixty-two weeks, altogether sixty-nine weeks. Then eventually, there is the last week. A week here indicates seven years. This seven-year period is divided into two parts. The first part is of three and a half years, and the second part is of three and a half years. The three and a half years is mentioned both in Daniel and Revelation. Sometimes it is mentioned in this way: “a time and times and half a time” (**Dan. 12:7**). That means one year, two years, and half a year or three and a half years. At other times it is designated as forty-two months or a thousand two hundred and sixty days (**Rev. 11:2-3; 12:6; 13:5**). The three and a half years, the forty-two months, or the thousand two hundred and sixty days all refer to the same period of time.

The man-child will be raptured in the middle of the last week, which means that after his rapture there will be another three and a half years. This indicates that there is more than one rapture of the saints just as there is more than one reaping of the harvest. First, there will be the reaping of the firstfruits and then the reaping of the harvest. Surely the reaping of the firstfruits will be earlier, and the reaping of the harvest will be later.

According to **Leviticus 23:22**, there will be even a further reaping. After the reaping of the firstfruits and the reaping of the general harvest, some of the grains will still not be ripe. These are the grains that are in the corners of the field and need more time to ripen under the hot sun. In **Leviticus 23** these late-ripening ones are called gleanings.

In principle, God’s harvest will also be gathered in three stages. Some will be gathered as the firstfruits, most will be gathered as the harvest, and a few will be left in the world as gleanings in the corners to be harvested at a later time, after the tribulation. This is a very serious matter. In a wheat field, the grains that ripen first are those nearer the center of the field, whereas the grains on the edges ripen last. They have to be left for a longer time in the field to be scoured and burned by the bright sun. Then they too will be ripened and ready to harvest. If we desire to ripen early, we need to be in the center of the church life. Do not stay on the edges of the church life. If you do, you may be left to ripen in the field.

THE NEED OF MATURITY

We are God’s cultivated land (**1 Cor. 3:9**), and as God’s cultivated land we may have at least three different stages of harvesting. Those who ripen early will be harvested first by the Lord and will be the overcomers as the

firstfruits. These will be taken by the Lord to the throne of God in the third heaven for God's satisfaction. Most will be left in the field for another length of time to ripen before they are harvested. A few who are on the edge of the church life, in the corners of the field, will be left until the last. The type of this kind of harvest is found in **Exodus 23** and **Leviticus 23**. The partial fulfillment is in **Matthew 13**, and the complete fulfillment is in **Revelation 14**. There we find the firstfruits and the harvest. According to the description in **Revelation 14**, the firstfruits are the saints who are saturated with the Lord Jesus. They are the ones who have been fully occupied with Christ and taken over by Christ until they are matured. My heart aches for many of the Lord's children who seem to be somewhat ignorant, careless, and dull concerning the need to be matured. How serious it is that we are God's cultivated land, God's crop! There is no doubt that we are wheat, but how mature are we? Will we be the firstfruits or the harvest or the gleanings? I beg you to take this word seriously and to bring this matter to the Lord. By such a reaping of God's crop, which we call the rapture, the Lord Jesus will transfer the reality of the kingdom into the manifestation of the kingdom. **Matthew 13:43** says, "Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." The righteous ones here are the overcomers. Those who are living in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens today will be raptured and transferred into the Father's kingdom to become the shining ones there.

THE PRINCIPLES AS A WARNING

Do not be tempted to be curious concerning all the details of these matters. What the Lord reveals to us is a principle. The principle is that the Lord's crop, His wheat, needs to be matured. Those who are matured will be taken first. Then after the firstfruits will come the harvest. There is no need for us to figure out the time that the firstfruits will be taken away and the time that the harvest will be taken away. Do not try to understand the Bible in this way. The Lord reveals to us not the details but the principles. The details would require tens of thousands of pages to describe. We do not need the details, but we do need to pick up the help from the principles. So forget about your curiosity, but pick up the principles as a warning. We all need to pick up the warning and to realize that we need to be mature. We all need to pray, "Lord, have mercy upon me that I would be a part of the firstfruits and that I would be an overcomer."

Pray that you will be a prudent virgin. Pray that the Lord will save you from being a foolish virgin. Do not try to pick up the details. Rather, pick up some living, unveiling, revealing, stirring, and encouraging word from the Lord. Otherwise, you may be clear about some of the details but miss the rapture. You may miss being an overcomer although you are clear about some of the facts. Pick up the principle to receive the warning. Do not be ensnared by the desire to have the knowledge concerning the details. We need to see God's purpose and intention, and we need to see our responsibility to cooperate with Him. We need to enjoy Christ, to participate in Him, and to take Him in until we are matured. Eventually, He will be expressed as our wedding garment, and we will be qualified to be co-kings with Him. Do not take all these points in order to systematize the Bible. May the Lord preserve us so that we will simply care for the pure and real revelation of the principles as a warning.

(The Kingdom, Chapter 39)