

THE GROWTH AND HARVEST OF THE REALITY OF THE KINGDOM (II)

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM UNDER THE RESTRICTION OF THE LAW OF LIFE

The children of the kingdom must have a righteousness that surpasses others' righteousness. First Corinthians 6:9 says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" **If we desire to inherit the kingdom of God, we must have righteousness. An unrighteous person can never inherit the kingdom of God.** Then Romans 14:17 says, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Righteousness comes first, then peace, then joy in the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:24 says that we "put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness." **The new man was created according to God in righteousness. Righteousness is always the first aspect.**

Revelation 19:7-8 says, "Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." **The fine linen is the righteousnesses, the righteous deeds, of the saints.** We have already pointed out that this righteousness will be the garment qualifying the bride to attend the marriage feast of the Bridegroom. Thus, **righteousness is extremely important.** Second Peter 3:13 says, "According to His promise we are expecting new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." New heavens and a new earth indicates eternity. **It is not simply a matter of having a righteousness that surpasses others' righteousness, but of having the righteousness that qualifies us to attend the marriage feast.** Eventually, in the new heaven and the new earth the significant aspect will be righteousness. **This is the development and harvest of the matter of righteousness.**

There are five other points included in this matter of righteousness. **The seed of being reconciled** as opposed to not killing is developed in Colossians 3:13: "Bearing one another and forgiving one another, if anyone should have a complaint against anyone; even as the Lord forgave you, so also should you forgive." Perhaps the single brothers and sisters and also the husbands and wives need to pray-read this verse. Then Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ also forgave you." This is the development of the seed of reconciliation.

The seed of the purity of the children of the kingdom of the heavens is developed in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4: "This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor." First Timothy 5:2 says, "Elderly women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity." **Paul exhorted Timothy to deal with the younger sisters in all purity. This is purity not only of the body but also of the inward parts of our being.**

In Matthew 5:34-37 the Lord Jesus said, "I tell you **not to swear at all.**" This seed is developed in James 5:12: "Above all things, my brothers, do not swear, neither by heaven nor by earth nor with any other oath; but let your yes be yes, and your no, no, lest you fall under judgment." The word of the apostle James is nearly the same as that of the Lord Jesus. It may be that James still remembered what the Lord Jesus had said on the mount. Ephesians 4:25 also develops this seed of not swearing: "Therefore having put off the lie, speak truth each one with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." **Because we are members one of another, we should put off the lie and speak truth each one with his neighbor. We all need to learn to be simple and to answer yes, yes or no, no.**

In Matthew 5:39 is **the seed of not resisting an evil person**: "I tell you not to resist him who is evil." This seed is developed in Romans 12:14: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." It continues in 12:17: "Repay no one evil for evil; take forethought for things honorable in the sight of all men." Paul develops this point further in 1 Corinthians 4:12b-13a: "Reviled we bless; persecuted we endure; defamed we exhort." First Corinthians 6:7 says, "Already then it is altogether a defeat to you that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?"

The seed of **loving your enemy** is sown in Matthew 5:43-46 and developed in Romans 12:20-21: **“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing this you will heap coals of fire upon his head.” Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.**”

THE PURITY OF THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM IN THEIR GOOD DEEDS

In Matthew 6 the Lord Jesus told us what our attitude should be toward giving, praying, and fasting. **We should give in a secret way so that we will not receive the glory of men.** We need to pray in a private way so that our Father who sees in secret may repay us. Furthermore, when we fast, we should anoint our head and wash our face so that we may not appear to men to be fasting. These seeds are developed in several verses. Galatians 5:26 says, “Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another.” We should not be desirous of vainglory, that is, of making a show. Philippians 2:3a says, “Doing nothing by way of selfish ambition nor by way of vainglory.” Concerning prayer, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Unceasingly pray.” Then Romans 12:12 says, “Rejoice in hope, endure in tribulation; persevere in prayer.” Concerning fasting, Acts 13:3 says, “When they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” These verses may be considered as the growth and development of the words spoken by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 6.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM TOWARD RICHES

Concerning riches, the Lord Jesus told us in Matthew 6 that **we should not store up for ourselves treasures on the earth** but that **we should store up for ourselves treasures in heaven.** Furthermore, He said that we cannot serve two masters. Either we will hate the one and love the other, or we will hold to one and despise the other. **We cannot serve God and mammon.**

The Lord also said that **we should not be anxious for our life, what we should eat or what we should drink, and what clothes we should put on.** Our heavenly Father knows that we need all these things. There is no need for us to be anxious about them. **If we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, all these things will be added to us.** We can see a development of this seed in Acts 4:32: “The heart and soul of the multitude of those who had believed was one; and not even one said that any of his possessions was his own, but all things were common to them.” It continues in verses 34 and 35: “Neither was anyone among them in need; for as many as were owners of lands or of houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the things which were sold and placed them at the feet of the apostles; and it was distributed to each, as anyone had need.” From these verses it is clear that the believers in the early church were not anxious concerning material things. Their attitude toward their riches was so liberated, so free. On the contrary, people in the world anxiously grasp everything they possess. **We Christians should not be like that. We need to be liberated from the possession of material things.**

Paul then quotes the Lord Jesus when he says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Our attitude should be that we love to give rather than receive. First Timothy 6:8-10 says, “Having food and covering, with these we will be content. But **those who intend to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is a root of all evils, because of which some, aspiring after money, have been led away from the faith and pierced themselves through with many pains.**” **We should not love money but should be content when we have something to eat and something to wear.** Verses 17 through 19 continue by saying, “Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God, who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment; to do good, to be rich in good works, to be ready to distribute, to be ones willing to share; laying away for themselves a good foundation as a treasure for the future, that they may lay hold on that which is really life.” Finally, let us read Romans 12:13a: **“Contribute to the needs of the saints.”** This means that **whenever there is a need among the saints and we have the ability to give something, we should do so.** We all must keep such a proper attitude toward riches.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM IN DEALING WITH OTHERS

In Matthew the Lord Jesus told us that **we should not judge others** (7:1-5). This seed is developed in 1 Corinthians 4:5a: “Do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord comes.” If we judge others, we also shall be judged. Now let us read Romans 14:10-13: “**But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God, for it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall openly confess to God.’ So then each one of us will give an account concerning himself to God. Therefore let us judge one another no longer, but rather judge this: not to put a stumbling block or cause of falling before your brother.**” James 5:9 says, “Do not complain, brothers, against one another lest you be judged. Behold, the Judge stands before the doors.” James 2:13 says, “The judgment is without mercy to him who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.” These verses show that if we judge others or criticize others, we are short of mercy. **We must remember that if we are unmerciful to others now, one day the Lord Jesus will also be unmerciful to us.**

THE GROUND OF THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM FOR THEIR WALK AND WORK

The Narrow Gate and the Constricted Way

The first ground sown by the Lord Jesus as a seed is **the narrow gate and the constricted way**. The proper Christian life is surely narrow. This seed is developed in 1 Corinthians 4:9b-13: “We have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools because of Christ, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are glorious, but we are dishonored. Until the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and buffeted and wander without a home; and we labor, working with our own hands. Reviled we bless; persecuted we endure; defamed we exhort. We have become as the offscouring of the world, the scum of all things, until now.” After reading these verses, could we consider that the apostle Paul took a broad way? **Surely he took a narrow gate with a constricted way.**

In 2 Corinthians 11:23b-27 Paul says, “In labors more abundantly, in imprisonments more abundantly, in stripes excessively, in deaths often. Under the hands of the Jews five times I received forty stripes less one; three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep; in journeys often, in dangers of rivers, in dangers of robbers, in dangers from my race, in dangers from the Gentiles, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wilderness, in dangers in the sea, in dangers among false brothers; in labor and hardship; in watchings often; in hunger and thirst; in fastings often; in cold and nakedness.” **Paul’s living, walk, and work could stand because they were built upon a solid foundation.** He did not take the broad way but the constricted way. If we take the broad way, our walk, our work, and our living cannot stand the test. **One day the rains will fall, the flood will come, and the winds will blow. Then what we are and what we have done will be damaged.**

Fruit Brought Forth of Life

The second seed that the Lord Jesus sowed concerning the ground of the children of the kingdom for their walk and work is the matter of **fruit brought forth of life** (Matt. 7:15-20). This seed is developed in Galatians 5:22-23: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” **These items are not simply outward conduct; they are the fruit of the Spirit by life.** Let us also read Ephesians 5:8-9: “You were once darkness but are now light in the Lord; **walk as children of light** (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth).” The fruit of the light is also the fruit of the Spirit.

The Will of God

The third ground of the children of the kingdom is **the will of God**. This seed is sown by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 7:21 and is developed in Romans 12:2: “Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and

perfect.” According to the context of Romans 12, it is clear that **the will of God is to have the Body life, the church, or we may say the kingdom. The kingdom is the will of God, and the church is the kingdom.**

The Word of Christ

The word of Christ as a ground for the children of the kingdom is sown in Matthew 7:24 and developed in Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.” First, we need to be filled with the word of Christ; then we need to live out the word of Christ. **The very word of Christ becomes the ground for our living, our walk, and our work.**

THE SEED OF THE BUILDING

DEVELOPED IN THE EPISTLES AND REVELATION

Have you ever noticed that the Lord Jesus ended His discourse on the mount with a building? The Sermon on the Mount ends with a building. The Lord Jesus said that **we must build our house on the solid ground which is able to stand testing from three directions.** It can stand testing in the form of **rains from the heavens, rivers from the earth, and winds from the air.** We have mentioned previously that these signify **tests from God, from man, and from the enemy, Satan.** **These three tests are tests upon the building. What we are, what we do, and our work for the Lord are related to the building.** Eventually, the whole Bible ends with a building, New Jerusalem. Matthew 5, 6, and 7 contain this seed. Then the Epistles and Revelation have the growth and the harvest of the seed of the building.

In Matthew 7 the building is mentioned only briefly, but in the Epistles there is much development. First Corinthians 3:12-14 says, “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.” This is a further development of the building from Matthew 7.

For the harvest of the seed of the building, we need to read Revelation 21:10-11, 18-21: “He carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal...And the building work of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.”

The Lord’s discourse in Matthew 5—7 begins with our being poor in spirit and concludes with the building. I believe many Christians have never seen that the Lord’s discourse on the mount consummates with the building. **In the reality of the kingdom, what we are, what we do, and what work we accomplish must be for the building.** Otherwise, our work can never stand solidly; **what we have done will either be destroyed or burned.**

The New Jerusalem will be the consummation of God’s building work in our building. God builds through our building. You may consider that you cannot build. But Paul says, “**I have laid the foundation**” (1 Cor. 3:10). He said that we all need to build on this foundation and that we need to take heed how we build. This means that we can build something. The building is not just a kind of work. It also must be our daily walk and our daily living. All these things will be in the building. In Matthew 7 the building was a little seed. In the Epistles there was the development and growth of the seed. The Epistles contain many verses concerning the development of the building. Eventually, the building consummates with the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the harvest of the building.

The life of the reality of the kingdom is for the building. We know this because the conclusion of the Lord’s word in His discourse on the mount concerning the reality of the kingdom is the building. What we are, what we do, and all our work must be for the building. We must take heed what we build and how we build. We may build something that will not stand the test from God. **We may be able to stand the test from man or even from Satan,**

but we can never stand the test from God. If we live in the reality of the kingdom and if we walk and work according to the inner life, taking Christ as our life, eventually we will build up something that can stand the test from every direction. Eventually, all the building will become consummately God's eternal building, the New Jerusalem.

CHRIST AS OUR LIFE

We should not consider that all these aspects of the reality of the kingdom are something we ourselves can work out. No! **It is impossible for us to work out even one little point.** We need to realize that all these aspects and points signify this one thing: **Christ as our life within.** All these aspects and all these points are simply **a complete expression of Christ. Hallelujah! Christ has come in! Christ is now within us as our life. We simply need to open ourselves to Him, to cooperate with Him, to take Him in and enjoy Him, and to let Him out. Then we will experience all the aspects and all the points. This is the reality of the kingdom.**

We have already seen that in Daniel 2 a stone became a great mountain. That stone signifies the Lord Jesus, and the mountain signifies the kingdom, filling the earth. **We all have to realize that the stone is within us. Christ, the building stone, is within us. This stone within us will be enlarged as we take Him as our nourishment and our enjoyment. When He is manifested from within us at His coming back, that will be the reality of the kingdom. The kingdom will simply be the enlargement of the indwelling Christ.** The kingdom life that has been planted into us will consummate with the building. The Gospels show that the Lord Jesus is sown into us as the seed of the kingdom, and the Epistles show how the seed grows and develops within us. Finally, Revelation shows how the growth consummates with a building, New Jerusalem. Praise the Lord! This is the kingdom! This is the Lord Jesus as the seed, the growth, and the harvest of the reality of the kingdom.

(The Kingdom, Chapter 43)