

## FROM REJECTION TO GLORY (2)

Scripture Reading: Matt. 15:1-11, 17-28

In this chapter we will continue the matter of following the Lord Jesus during the period from His rejection in Matthew 13 until the full coming of the kingdom in the future. As we have pointed out, the book of Matthew was not written according to historical sequence, but according to revelation. Matthew selected certain instances of the Lord's walk on earth and compiled them to present a particular revelation. **From chapter 13 to the first part of chapter 17, Matthew put several incidents together in order to show us the proper way to follow the Lord Jesus during the time of His rejection and before the manifestation of the kingdom.** As we have seen in the last chapter, we must follow Him into the wilderness, where we need to have faith in Him for our living. We live by faith in Him. Also, for our way on the stormy sea, we need to trust Him. In spite of many storms and contrary winds, we may simply have peace in Christ. We have no fear of the winds and the waves because our life is in His hands. Thus, we are at peace.

All the kingdom people must realize that the Lord Jesus is very practical. He knows when we are **hungry** and when we are in **need**. He also knows when we are **facing a storm**. On the one hand, He is praying for us on the mountain, and on the other hand, He comes to be with us on the sea. He is the very Jehovah-plus and God-plus. *"Behold, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age"* (28:20). We need living faith in the practical Lord Jesus. Never forget that genuine faith is simply to realize what the Lord Jesus is. He is real and He is practical. If we truly believe that He is practical, we will be at peace whenever we have a need. He gave us a promise in Matthew 6:33: *"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."* The Lord gives us the kingdom plus something additional—the needs for our daily living. While we are seeking His kingdom, our daily needs will be supplied as something additional. Our way is always secure. However, it may not be secure according to outward situations or circumstances. Outwardly speaking, we may be in danger. We may be in a storm or on a raging sea, but actually we are very safe. The Lord Jesus is safer than a little boat, and He is even more secure than a peaceful sea. All the storms are under His feet. As we look back on the past years, we can surely testify that He is faithful.

## THE KINGDOM AS A REALITY

Now we come to the third point of following the Lord Jesus during the time of His rejection. While we are following Him in the kingdom life, **we have to realize the kingdom as a reality**. The kingdom does not have an outward, formal appearance. Religion, on the contrary, has altogether a **false appearance**. Religion cares for the outward appearance. If you visit the so-called Christian churches at the eleven o'clock service on Sunday morning, you will find that everything appears nice outwardly. Everyone is neat and clean, kind and good. But that is a formal, outward falsehood. Do you think that the people attending the service are really that clean, kind, humble, and nice? Look at the choirs and at every aspect of the service—do they have reality? In the words of Matthew 15:2, they wash their hands outwardly, but their heart is defiled. They may cleanse their hands, but their heart is corrupt and dirty. The so-called church services are outwardly very quiet, and they would condemn us for shouting and praising in our meetings. Outwardly, religiously, and formally, the people are quiet and everything is in order, but inwardly, they are full of confusion and corruption. **Here is the main point**: in the kingdom we must not be concerned about the outward washing of hands. If the outward situation is a mess, do not try to change it. Leave it the way it is. If you have long hair, do not cut it short just to appear nice outwardly. You may have short hair and appear outwardly to be a very nice person, but inwardly you may be corrupt. Do not be concerned with the outward appearance; the reality of the kingdom is not in the outward appearance. The reality of the kingdom is something inward. **What about your heart? What about your motive?** What you really are is decided not by your outward conduct but by what is in your heart. Outwardly, you may be neat, clean, pure, kind, and orderly, but inwardly, you may be completely different. Thus, you are not full of reality but full of hypocrisy and falsehood.

Here the Lord Jesus revealed His wisdom to the Pharisees and hypocrites. He dealt with the actual situation of their inward being. The Pharisees needed to realize that there was nothing good within their heart. We are the same. **What comes out of our heart?** Does love or purity or honesty or sincerity come out of our heart? In Matthew 15:18-19 the Lord did not mention one good thing that issues out of our heart. This is a revelation showing us what we really are. **By nature and by birth we are ruined and corrupted. Never think that you are good. Although you may outwardly seem to be good, inwardly you are defiled.** If you would say to me that I appear nice outwardly, but that inwardly I am not good, I would say that you are absolutely right. Sisters, you are lovely and nice outwardly but not inwardly. By birth and by nature, we are all totally corrupted. The Lord's word shows us what proceeds out of our heart. So in the

kingdom it is not a matter of outward conduct. Forget about the outward behavior. The kingdom is not a pretense; the kingdom is a reality. Do not worship God by the outward washing of your hands. The Lord does not care for that and even considers that as vain worship (vv. 8-9).

I myself was more than religious. I was taught, trained, instructed, and even built up in a religious way. I was trained to come to the meeting in a proper order and with a proper appearance. Gradually, the Lord showed me that all of this was simply the outward washing of hands. However, if we purposely and intentionally attempt to have a wild religion, that also is entirely outward. It will be an outward, unpolished religion. The kingdom is a reality, and there is nothing false in it. What does it mean to be real? It means that everything comes out of our inner being. **Do not pretend.** Let everything proceed out of what you are. In the kingdom life, every point and every aspect must be real and genuine. Do not be concerned about the outward appearance. We all must take care of our inward being. Yet we need to realize that our natural being is ruined and corrupted. We should not attempt to change or correct it. What, then, should we do? The answer is found in the case of the Canaanite woman (vv. 21-28).

### THE CANAANITE WOMAN

Apparently, the case of the Canaanite woman is unrelated to the case of the outward washing of hands. Actually, these two are intimately related to one another. **This case concerns the Lord Jesus as our food, our nourishment.** We all must observe one principle when reading the book of Matthew: do not read simply according to the black and white letters, but go to the Lord and ask, “*Lord, what is implied here?*” Just as the title of God—the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—implies resurrection, something not found in the black and white letters (22:31-32), so it is with the entire book of Matthew. Almost every verse in this book is related to the kingdom.

After speaking to the Pharisees about vain worship and about the heart of man, the Lord Jesus withdrew into the parts of Tyre and Sidon, a Gentile region. He did not go to the priests or to the temple but to the Gentile world. While He was there, a woman of Canaan, considered by the Jews as a Gentile dog, came to Him. This comes as a striking **contrast** when compared with the previous case of the Lord’s dealing with the Pharisees. The Pharisees talked about outward things—outward washing, outward correction, and outward improvement. This was not so with the Gentile woman. **In this incident, the Lord covered the matter of inward nourishment.** The woman herself did not initiate the matter of nourishment; rather, she attempted to imitate the Jewish religion by calling the Lord Jesus the Son of David. This was a Jewish term, and no

Gentile had the position to use it. The Lord Jesus was exceedingly wise in answering the woman. In all of human history there has never been another person as wise as He. He said, *“I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (15:24). This brief answer implies several things. The Lord, in effect, was saying, *“If you call Me the Son of David, you should be an Israelite, but you are not. I came for the children of Israel. As the Son of David, I am not for you. You are the wrong person to address Me this way.”* Do not think, however, that the Lord Jesus intended to reject her. The Lord had no intention of rejecting her. He simply wanted her to realize that she did not have the position to address Him as the Son of David. Only Israelites could speak to Him in this way.

The Lord went on to say, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs” (v. 26). By this statement He implied that He had come to be bread. It also implied the position of the Canaanite woman. Her position was that of a Gentile dog. Immediately, though, that “Gentile dog” willingly took her position and claimed her portion. She no longer used the title Son of David. She seemed to say, “Yes, Lord, I am a Gentile dog, but even a dog has a dog’s portion. The children have their portion, and their portion is on the table. The dog’s portion is under the table. When the children’s portion falls under the table, it becomes the dog’s portion. Lord Jesus, You are the children’s bread, but You have fallen under the table. Now You are not on the table of Israel, but You are here under the table at Tyre and Sidon. You have fallen to the ground beneath the table, and now You are my portion.” After the Lord heard this, He granted her request. **Forget about the outward washing of hands but gather up all the crumbs of Christ and eat them.** Because the Jews rejected Him, He is not on the table; He is under the table as our portion. We are not children; we are Gentile dogs, but we are eating the children’s food. By eating of Christ, we Gentile dogs will be regenerated into children.

Let me ask you quite frankly: **Are you dogs or children?** How can dogs be changed into children? Is it by an outward washing? If you washed a dog thirty times a day, he would still remain a dog; a dog can never be changed by washing. But the dogs can eat the crumbs, the children’s food, and be transformed into children. Originally, all the kingdom people were dogs, but by feeding on the crumbs of the Lord Jesus, we have been transformed into children. Sometimes the dog’s tail is still visible. Occasionally, I can see a Chinese tail, and at other times I can see an American tail. And other times I can see a Japanese or a German tail. Although we all have become children, some trace of the dog’s tail remains. However, this does not bother me. I have the full

assurance that after a period of time, perhaps a few months or a year, all the tails will be swallowed up by the proper eating of the Lord Jesus. It is not a matter of an outward washing of hands; it is a matter of eating the crumbs.

There is a connecting line between these two cases. The Lord Jesus said that what we take into us, meaning what we eat, does not defile us. That which comes out of us is what defiles us. What then should we take into us? We must take in the crumbs. **In the first case we have the matter of taking in; in the second case we have the matter of the eating of crumbs.** We will never be defiled by taking Christ into us, but anything that comes out of us will defile others. We must be careful never to allow anything to proceed out of us. Neither should we receive anything that issues out of others, for that will defile us. We should simply take in Christ and allow Him to swallow up all the ruin and uncleanness within us. We should simply eat the crumbs of Christ day by day. Then we will be clean, not by the outward washing of hands but by the inward, metabolic washing of our inner being. We will be clean by taking Christ into our being. We need to let Christ swallow us up and transform us from dogs into children.

### **NOT TAKING ANY LEAVEN**

Following this, we have the third case in which the Lord Jesus charged His disciples not to take any leaven. *“Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees”* (16:6). These three cases should be joined together. We need to take in Christ as the crumbs, but we should not accept any leaven. We should take the bread and the crumbs of the bread but not the leaven. The Lord Jesus only gives us bread; He never gives us leaven.

### **The Leaven of the Pharisees**

We must beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. What is the leaven of the Pharisees? **It is to be religious, scriptural, fundamental, outwardly right, and yet have no life, no Spirit, no reality, and no sincerity.** Please remember all these words. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees was not simply that they did evil things while pretending to be good. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees meant that they were religious, scriptural, fundamental, and outwardly right, yet they had nothing of the Spirit, of life, of reality, and of sincerity. This is leaven. This kind of leaven can still be found among Christians today. People may criticize us for shouting and praising the Lord, saying that we are crazy, while they consider themselves to be sound, good, and fundamental. In a sense, they are today's Pharisees, having no life, no Spirit, no reality, and no sincerity.

## The Leaven of the Sadducees

What is the leaven of the Sadducees? **The leaven of the Sadducees means to be realistic, reasonable, and philosophical. This is like the modernism of today.** We may say that the modernists are modern Sadducees and that the Sadducees were the ancient modernists. They are both in the same category. They are realistic and philosophical, but they do not believe in God, in the Word of God, or in resurrection. They do not believe in anything that is divine because they are so philosophical and reasonable. There is no reality among them because they, like the Pharisees, lack the Spirit and the life. This is the leaven of the Sadducees. Today we are confronted with both fundamentalism and modernism. The leaven of the Pharisees is simply today's fundamentalism; the leaven of the Sadducees is today's modernism. We should eat the crumbs of Christ, but we should not accept any leaven.

**Do not wash your hands outwardly; that means nothing.** The washing of hands represents outward correction, improvement, and adjustment. To change, improve, and correct our behavior is signified by the washing of hands. The Lord Jesus is not concerned about the outward change. He is concerned about your inward being. What is within you? What is in your heart? That is what really matters. Whatever we perform outwardly will never change us. But we have the Lord Jesus who is good for our eating. He can come into us. Although we are not qualified to eat the children's bread, we are fully qualified to eat the dog's crumbs. If the dogs eat the crumbs, they will be transformed into children. However, do not eat any leaven. While you are eating the crumbs, there is the danger that you may take in the leaven. We should separate these two things. We should take the bread but **reject the leaven.**

We look to the Lord that in the local churches there may be many crumbs of Christ but no leaven of fundamentalism or modernism. May there be the Spirit, the life, the reality, and the sincerity. These are the crumbs for us to enjoy. This is for the kingdom life. While we are following the Lord Jesus in the wilderness during the time of His rejection, we must take care of our eating.

If we have seen the vision from Matthew 15, we will not be concerned for the outward washing of hands. We will only care for the inward eating of the crumbs. I do not care for any outward washing. I only care for how much you have eaten the crumbs of Christ. While you are eating, beware of the leaven. When you are hungry, you need to be careful what you eat. It is wonderful to eat the crumbs, but it is better to remain hungry than to eat leaven. Both fundamentalism and modernism are leaven. Even if

you are starving, do not accept any leaven. Only take Christ. The crumbs of Christ may not have such a good appearance, but they are so nourishing. You should gladly take them in. However, regardless of how good or nice it appears, never take in leaven. Do not be concerned for the outward washing of hands. Only care for the inward eating of the crumbs of Christ.