

## CHRIST RESURRECTED, ASCENDED, AND REIGNING

*Scripture Reading: Matt. 22:1-14, 15-22, 23-32, 34-40, 41-46*

We need to remember that **Matthew is a book in which the seeds of the kingdom are sown**. In Matthew there is the kingdom and also Christ for the kingdom. There is the seed of the kingdom, and there is the seed of Christ. Many of the basic aspects of the kingdom were sown as seeds in the book of Matthew and developed in the following books of the New Testament. **The seed is in Matthew, the sprouting is in Acts, the growth and blossoming are in the Epistles, and the maturity and harvest are in Revelation. It is exactly the same with Christ. The seed of Christ is sown in Matthew, sprouts in Acts, grows, blossoms, and brings forth fruit in the Epistles, and is fully developed and matured with the full harvest in the book of Revelation.**

In nearly every chapter, the book of Matthew reveals some aspect of the kingdom, and it also presents Christ again and again from many different angles. We have seen that in chapter 1 Christ is Jehovah-plus and God-plus, Jehovah the Savior and God with us. In chapter 3 He is revealed as the Son of God who baptizes people into the Spirit of God. In chapter 4 He is revealed as the great light shining over the people who sit in darkness. By this shining, He spreads Himself into people, causing them to follow Him. In chapter 9 Christ is the feast, the Bridegroom, the new garment, the new wine, and the new wineskin. In chapter 11 He is our rest, and in chapter 12 He is the temple, the present David, the Lord of the Sabbath, the greater Jonah, and the greater Solomon. In chapter 16 He is revealed as the Son of the living God and as the Christ who will build His church. In chapter 17 Christ, the Son of God, is transfigured on the mountain, and God declares that this is His beloved Son, the only One we should hear.

### THE TESTING OF THE LORD JESUS

After being revealed in such a way, the Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time to accomplish God's eternal purpose by being crucified. The Lord Jesus knew what was before Him, so while He was traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem, He told His disciples at least three times that He was going to Jerusalem to be crucified and resurrected. In the type of the passover, the lamb had to be examined for several days before the actual passover feast (Exo. 12:3, 6). According to the Jewish way of reckoning, this period was six days. The Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem and, like the passover lamb, was examined by the people for several days preceding the passover. **He was tested by the leaders of the people—the chief priests, the elders, the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, and a lawyer. These tests came from at least four directions: from religion, politics, fundamental beliefs, and the law. As a result of this testing, the examiners themselves were exposed that they were distracted from Christ and occupied with worthless things. All of them missed the mark, and none of them saw Christ, the real treasure. They gave their complete attention to things other than Christ. All the people with high attainment, knowledge, and education surrounded the Lord Jesus and examined Him, presuming themselves to be wise. They did not realize how foolish they were. Not one of them was seeking the real treasure. Not one of them saw God's goal or economy. Not one of them perceived God's center and focus. They could only see what they themselves considered as valuable and important.**

### MISSING CHRIST

The situation is the same today. Christians pay attention to many things but neglect Christ. Although they think they are clever, they really do not know what they are doing. The men who

tested the Lord Jesus completely missed the mark, but the Lord Jesus knew what He was doing. Although they missed the mark, He never gave up His goal. Even as He answered their foolish questions, He held on to the goal. This shows that the Lord Jesus will take advantage of any opportunity to reveal Himself. We may inquire foolishly, but the Lord will always answer wisely. Our question may be wrong, but the Lord's reply will contain something precious.

### REVEALING CHRIST

As He answered all the people who were testing Him, the Lord Jesus revealed Himself in an all-inclusive way. However, it was in a mysterious and hidden way because He revealed Himself through parables. Consider the parable of the vineyard. In such a simple and hidden way the Lord Jesus revealed Himself as the Son of God and as the Heir of God's universal inheritance. He also declared that He would be rejected and resurrected as the cornerstone for God's building. Anyone who falls upon Him will be broken. This is a great matter. If we had been there at the time with this vision, we would have realized the seriousness of His words. Those who tested the Lord Jesus were quite foolish. They did not realize the significance of what the Lord Jesus was saying.

This is the all-inclusive seed sown in Matthew. **The Lord Jesus as the stone has three aspects: He is the cornerstone for the building of God, the church; He is the stumbling stone for the unbelieving Jews; and He is the smiting stone, which, at His return from the heavens, will fall upon all the nations and break them into pieces** (Dan. 2:34-35). We need to see that the Lord Jesus is the stone in these three aspects. This seed is sown in Matthew and is developed throughout the remainder of the New Testament, where all three aspects sprout, blossom, and reach the full harvest. In Acts 4:11 Peter said that Christ is the stone rejected by the builders and raised up in resurrection to be the head of the corner. He repeated this in 1 Peter 2:6-8. In Ephesians 2:20 Paul also refers to Christ as the cornerstone. According to Romans 9:32-33, Paul says that Christ has become the stone of stumbling to the unbelieving Jews. The New Testament also develops the thought that Christ will smite the Gentile nations (Rev. 19:15). How marvelous that in such a brief parable the Lord Jesus revealed Himself in so many aspects! At least five points were mentioned: **Christ is the Son of God, the Heir of God's inheritance, the cornerstone, the stumbling stone, and the smiting stone.** What a rich revelation of Christ! The religious people asked Him, "Who gave You this authority?" The Lord Jesus answered that He was the Son of God, the Heir of God's inheritance, the cornerstone, the stumbling stone, and the smiting stone. What other authority did He need? No authority could be higher than this.

### THE WEDDING FEAST

Christ is further revealed in the parable of the wedding feast. Strictly speaking, **the kingdom is not a matter of labor; it is a matter of enjoyment.** We know this because **He is also the Bridegroom, the focus of God's pleasure, the very center of God's happiness and joy.** During the ancient times a father would prepare a wedding feast for his son with great joy. No one could describe the father's joy as he prepared the wedding feast for his son. Our heavenly Father also has such a joy as He prepares the wedding feast for His Son. Although His Son is the focus and center of the wedding feast, the most joyful One is the Father. This is the good pleasure of the Father. According to His good pleasure, the Father has prepared a wedding feast for His Son, who is the Bridegroom.

### THE WEDDING GARMENT

When the glad tidings of this wedding feast were proclaimed, many people rejected them. A good number did respond, however, by accepting the invitation and coming to the wedding feast with

joy and pleasure. Unfortunately, some of those who were called and came did not have a wedding garment. For the wedding feast, there is the need of a wedding garment. The wedding feast is Christ, and the wedding garment also is Christ. In the Bible there are **these two aspects of Christ: on the one hand, He is our food; on the other hand, He is our clothing. Within He is our food, and without He is our garment.**

This parable does not refer to the present enjoyment of Christ but to the future enjoyment of Christ at His coming back. **The present enjoyment of Christ today is a foretaste, and the future enjoyment of Christ will be the full taste. The foretaste is for the full taste.** If you do not enjoy the proper foretaste, it will be difficult for you to enjoy the full taste. Thus, we all need to feast upon Christ today in order to have the proper full taste in the future. When we eat Christ and feed upon Him, we will have the proper foretaste, and Christ will gradually saturate our inward being and will be lived out of us as our expression. This expression of Christ will become our wedding garment. The spreading of the Lord Jesus from within will eventually become our expression, our wedding garment, and will qualify us to enjoy the full taste at the wedding feast. If you lack the foretaste today, you will have neither the spreading of Christ within you nor the wedding garment to qualify you for the full taste at His coming back.

### FEW ARE CHOSEN

According to this parable, **“Many are called but few are chosen”** (Matt. 22:14). What does this mean? **All genuine Christians have been called. They have believed in the Lord Jesus. But, after being called, many have not enjoyed the Lord Jesus properly as the foretaste. The Lord Jesus has not saturated them, taken full possession of them, and spread Himself into all the inward parts of their being. Neither has He been able to express Himself out of their being. Many of the called ones have never known this kind of enjoyment of Christ in their personal experience.** Therefore, at the time of the full manifestation of the kingdom, they will lack a wedding garment and will not be qualified for the wedding feast. They will be unable to participate in the full taste of the enjoyment of Christ. This corresponds with what we have seen previously regarding Christ coming into us and spreading Himself into our being and expressing Himself out from our being. This expression of Christ will become our wedding garment.

You should not be foolish like the Pharisees. You must be keen and alert. You have been called, but you may not have constantly enjoyed Christ in an adequate way. Yet it is not too late if you begin immediately. You should start immediately to have the foretaste in a proper way, to experience Christ adequately by eating Him daily and allowing Him to spread throughout your being. Gradually, you will have a full expression of Christ, and that will be your wedding garment. When the time arrives, you will have the wedding garment for the wedding feast. To us, Christ is not only the building stone, He is also the wedding feast and the wedding garment. He is our center, our focus. As far as we are concerned, everything is focused on Christ as our enjoyment.

### THE TREASURE—CHRIST

In Matthew these items of Christ are in seed form. We can see the blossoming in the Epistles and the harvest in Revelation. In answering the foolish questions of the religious people, the Lord Jesus spontaneously revealed Himself in a full way. Nevertheless, there is more. What has been revealed is insufficient; there is something more to be revealed about Christ. The mouths of all the inquirers were shut, and all the problems and questions were solved. Eventually, the Lord Jesus presented them the treasure by asking, “What do you think concerning the Christ? Whose son is He?” (v. 42).

Forget about religion, politics, doctrines, and questions of the law. The question of questions is, “What do you think concerning the Christ?” When they answered that Christ is the son of David, the Lord then asked them, “How then does David in spirit call Him Lord?” (v. 43). We may ask the same question. It is because He is both the son of David and the Lord of David. Christ is man, and He is also God. He has both divinity and humanity. **In His humanity He is the son of David; in His divinity He is the Lord of David.**

In addition, by His simple and brief word in Matthew 22:44, the Lord sowed the seed of His ascension and coming victory over the enemy to set up His kingdom. “The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand until I put Your enemies underneath Your feet.” The words are simple and brief, yet the implication is vast and far-reaching. **This statement implies that Christ will be resurrected, ascended, and set on the right hand of God. It also implies that Christ will return in victory over all His enemies to establish the kingdom of God. God will put His enemies underneath His feet. What a Christ! He is man, God, the resurrected One, the ascended One, the coming One, the victorious One, and the One who will set up God’s kingdom over His enemy. What a revelation of Christ! This is Christ as the all-inclusive seed.**

Can you recall all the aspects that we have covered? **Christ is the Son of God, the Heir of God, the building stone, the stumbling stone, the smiting stone, the feast, the wedding garment, man, God, the resurrected and ascended One, the coming and victorious One, and the One who will establish God’s kingdom on the earth over every enemy.** This is the seed that is developed throughout the remainder of the New Testament until it reaches maturity in the book of Revelation.

We should not be like those Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians. **We must be always keen and alert to apply Christ to our situation.** “O Lord Jesus, You are the Son of God! You are the Heir of God! I take You as the building stone; I take You as the wedding feast and as the wedding garment. I take You as man and as God. I take You as the resurrected and ascended One. I take You as the coming One, the victorious One, and as the One who will set up God’s kingdom on the earth.” I hope that all the saints in the churches will concentrate on these matters. If you do so, you will be enlightened by Christ. You will be filled and saturated with Him. You will then have a new way of understanding the Bible. You will understand the Bible not as a mere book of stories or doctrines; you will take the Bible as a revelation of Christ with all His riches. Spend time on the aspects of Christ revealed in His answers to the religious people. Truly He is everything. Matthew is a book of the living Christ, a rich Christ, a practical Christ, a present Christ, and an experiential Christ. This Christ is our wedding feast and our wedding garment.

### IN OUR SPIRIT

**We can realize Him, apply Him, experience Him, and enjoy Him in our spirit. We all must be in our spirit.** Have you seen the revelation of Christ? If so, turn to your spirit and call Him Lord. David in spirit called Him Lord. Please notice that the word spirit has a small letter s, denoting our human spirit. David called Him Lord in spirit, and this is what we also need to do today. We need to call Him Lord in our spirit. It makes a great difference. The first sentence of the Lord’s teaching in the book of Matthew was concerning our spirit. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens” (5:3). We need to call Him Lord in our spirit. **We need to be poor in spirit, and we also need to call Him Lord in our spirit.**

*(The Kingdom, Chapter 31)*