

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

We have pointed out previously that many matters concerning the kingdom are in Matthew in seed form. We have also pointed out that the kingdom has three aspects: **the reality**, **the appearance**, and **the manifestation**. The seed of the reality of the kingdom is in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. **Now we need to see the growth and the harvest of the reality of the kingdom.** In a previous chapter we covered seven aspects of the reality of the kingdom, including: the character of the children of the kingdom under the ruling of the heavens, the influence of the children of the kingdom upon the world, the righteousness of the children of the kingdom under the restriction of the law of life, the purity of the children of the kingdom in their good deeds, the attitude of the children of the kingdom toward mammon or riches, the principle of the children of the kingdom in dealing with others, and the grounds of the children of the kingdom for their walk and work. These seven aspects are in **seed form in Matthew**; they are **developed in succeeding books, especially the Epistles**; and they are **harvested in the book of Revelation**.

POOR IN SPIRIT

The first aspect of the character of the children of the kingdom under the ruling of the heavens is that they are **poor in spirit**. This point is **sown** in Matthew and **developed** in the Epistles and in Revelation. We need to read Romans 8:16 and 1:9: “The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God...For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers.” Matthew says that we need to be poor in spirit, and Romans 8:16 says the Spirit is bearing witness with our spirit. **If we are not poor in spirit, empty in spirit, there is no way for the Spirit to come into us and witness in our spirit.** Once we are poor in spirit, the Spirit can come in and fill us with Himself. The Spirit is with our spirit. Moreover, in Romans 1:9 Paul says that **he served God in his spirit**. Originally, **his spirit was idle and filled up with worthless things, but now all the worthless things are gone. God’s Spirit filled his spirit, and he served God in his spirit.**

In Revelation 1:10 John said, “I was in spirit on the Lord’s Day and heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.” According to the proper translation of this verse, there is no definite article before the word spirit. Furthermore, the s in spirit should not be a capital S but a lowercase s, indicating it is the **human spirit**. John was in his human spirit on the Lord’s Day and heard behind him a loud voice. After he heard the voice, verse 12 continues by saying, “I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands.” This verse shows that **in order to see the churches, we must be in our human spirit**. Romans 8 indicates that **we must be poor in spirit** so that the Spirit may come into us. Romans 1 indicates that after the Spirit has filled our spirit, **we may serve God in our spirit**. Then Revelation 1:10 and 12 indicate that **in order to see the churches we must be in our spirit**.

We also need to read Revelation 21:10-11: “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.” Again the proper rendering of this verse is **“in spirit,”** with a small letter s and no definite article. This is the same as Revelation 1:10. **The way for us to see the holy city, Jerusalem, is to be carried away in spirit onto a great and high mountain.**

By putting all these verses together, **we can see from Romans and Revelation a rich development and harvest of the seed of the human spirit**. Matthew begins by speaking of our need to be poor in spirit; Romans continues by saying that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit and that we serve God in our spirit; eventually, we see the churches and the New Jerusalem in our spirit. **The seed is in Matthew 5; the growth is in Romans and other Epistles; the harvest is in Revelation.**

MOURNING

The **seed of mourning** is sown in Matthew 5:4: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Now let us read some verses that show the development of the seed of mourning. First is Acts 20:31: “Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.” For Paul to admonish the church with tears night and day indicates that **he was mourning for the condition of the church and the believers**. Romans 9:2 says, “I have great grief and unceasing pain in my heart.” **This verse shows Paul’s**

mourning for the people of Israel that they might be saved. He had great grief and unceasing pain in his heart because of them. Finally, 2 Corinthians 7:7 says, “Not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted because of you, declaring to us your longing, your lamentation, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced the more.” This verse indicates that not only Paul but also the Corinthians were lamenting concerning a certain situation. Thus, the aspect of mourning is developed in the Epistles.

MEEKNESS

The third seed of the reality of the kingdom sown in Matthew is meekness. Matthew 5:5 says, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Ephesians 4:2 develops the matter of meekness: “With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love.” This verse mentions not only meekness but also lowliness with long-suffering and bearing one another in love. This is much more than simply meekness; it indicates some rich development. Titus 3:2 says, “To slander no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing all meekness toward all men.” The gentleness and the showing all meekness toward all men is a development of the meekness in Matthew 5:5. James 3:13 says, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good manner of life his works in meekness of wisdom.” These verses show a rich and full development of the seed of meekness which was sown in Matthew.

HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The seed of **hungering and thirsting for righteousness** is developed in 1 Timothy 6:11: “You, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness.” It is further developed in 2 Timothy 2:22: “Flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

MERCIFUL

The matter of **showing mercy** is developed in Romans 12:8b: “He who shows mercy, in cheerfulness.” This verse indicates that even the showing of mercy is a gift. Many Christians have never considered this. From the context of Romans 12, showing mercy is listed as a gift along with teaching, leading, exhorting, and prophesying. In this chapter even the extending of hospitality to guests is a gift. Both showing mercy and giving hospitality are gifts. Finally, Colossians 3:12 says, “Put on therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, inward parts of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering.”

PURE IN HEART

The seed of being **pure in heart** is developed in 2 Timothy 2:22c: “With those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Here something is added to being pure in heart. That is, **you must pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.** There is not only the matter of a pure heart but also the matter of calling out of such a pure heart. Matthew 5 only says “pure in heart,” but here Paul adds pursuing and calling on the Lord with others. Second Corinthians 3:16 says, “Whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” **Whenever our heart turns to the Lord, the veils are taken away. This is a further development of being pure in heart. It is having a heart that is turned to the Lord so that all the veils are gone.**

MAKING PEACE

The matter of **making peace** is developed in Hebrews 12:14: “Pursue peace with all men and sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord.” Ephesians 4:3 says, “Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.” Finally, James 3:18 says, “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” Peace and righteousness are always related. **If we do not have righteousness, it is impossible for us to have peace.** Righteousness must come first, and then peace will come. Why is there no peace on the earth? It is because there is no righteousness. Because the nations are not righteous, they have no peace. **When we have the Lord Jesus, we have the real righteousness; then we have peace. This is why we must first pursue righteousness and then peace.**

SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Acts 14:22 says, “Establishing the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.” **This verse says that we enter into the**

kingdom of God through many tribulations, or much suffering. To suffer for righteousness is simply to suffer for the kingdom, because God's kingdom is one of righteousness. Moreover, 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "Indeed all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." To live godly in Christ Jesus is to have the real righteousness. The real righteousness will cause a kind of suffering.

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

The seed of suffering for Christ is developed in Acts 5:41-42: "So they went from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the Name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ." Here the disciples rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. The Lord Jesus told His disciples that when they were persecuted for His sake, they should rejoice. Surely Peter and John believed the Lord and remembered what He told them on the mount. Thus, they were rejoicing because of their suffering for Christ. Paul indicates that he suffered for Christ in Acts 20:19 and 24: "Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews...But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God." These verses indicate that Paul was a brother willing to suffer everything for Christ, even the loss of his life.

From all these verses, we can see the development of the reality of the kingdom revealed in Matthew 5. As a conclusion to this point, we need to read 2 Corinthians 6:4-10: "In everything we commend ourselves as ministers of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; in pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in a holy spirit, in unfeigned love, in the word of truth, in the power of God; through the weapons of righteousness on the right and on the left, through glory and dishonor, through evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown and yet well known; as dying and yet behold we live; as being disciplined and yet not being put to death; as made sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things." In verse 6 holy spirit should be lowercased, indicating that our spirit has become a holy spirit. There is no article in the original language.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM UPON THE WORLD

As Salt

As we have seen, salt is used to kill corruption and leaven. Where there is salt, there is no leaven. The seed of the salt of the earth is sown in Matthew 5:13 and is developed in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8: "Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened; for our Passover, Christ, also has been sacrificed. So then let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." These verses say that we should purge out the leaven and keep the feast with unleavened bread. This simply means that we should be the salt and not allow any leaven to exist.

Then we need to read Ephesians 4:22-24: "That you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality." Here the old man is a kind of corruption, and the new man is a kind of salt. Because the new man bears the righteousness and holiness of God, he is the salt. We were the old man, but we have been renewed and transformed into the new man. Now we are no longer leaven corrupting others, but instead we are salt killing the corruption.

As Light

Matthew 5:14 says that we are the light of the world. This seed is developed in Philippians 2:15-16a: "That you may be blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as luminaries in the world, holding forth the word of life, so that I may have a boast in the day of Christ." The seed of the Lord's disciples being the light of the world reaches its fullest development in Revelation 1:20: "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the

seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.” This verse shows us not merely a small lamp but a lampstand. In Matthew 5 there is only a small lamp, but in Revelation 1 there are seven lampstands. This is the full development of our being light to the world. Revelation 2:5 says, “Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.” This verse also shows that Christians as the church must eventually be a lampstand. In Matthew 5 there is merely a lamp; in Revelation there is the full development of the lampstands shining in the darkness.

(The Kingdom, Chapter 43)