

THE HARVEST OF THE KINGDOM IN REVELATION

The harvest of the kingdom is in the book of Revelation. In principle, whatever is revealed in the first pages of a book is the main point of that book. For example, Genesis begins, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Surely Genesis is a book that reveals God's creation. What is revealed in the first few verses of the book of Revelation? In 1:9 John tells us that he is our brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus. He is our companion in the kingdom! **The Lord's intention in this book is to open up the matter of the kingdom to all the saints.** Yet in the first few chapters of Revelation, the lampstands, the churches, are revealed, not the kingdom. This means that, practically speaking, **the churches are the kingdom.** The proper church life is the reality of the kingdom. The churches are not just for the churches but for the kingdom. In Revelation John does not say that he is one of the members of the Body of Christ but that he is our companion in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus. **Tribulation is needed for the kingdom, and endurance is needed for the tribulation. If we would enter into the kingdom, we must suffer. To bear the suffering, we need a certain amount of endurance. And this is not our endurance but the endurance of Jesus.** Thus, the book of Revelation opens with the kingdom.

In Revelation 12 there is the birth of the man-child. **The man-child signifies the overcomers who have the authority to rule over the nations.** This man-child will be raptured to the throne of God in the heavens. When the man-child is raptured to the throne, there will be a great battle in the heavens against Satan, and Satan will be cast down to the earth. **Today the enemy, Satan, is still in the heavens, but once the overcomers arrive there, he will have no place. He will be cast down.** Once he is cast down, a loud voice will declare, **"Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night"** (v. 10). Thus, Revelation begins with the kingdom in chapter 1 and also declares the coming of the kingdom in chapter 12. This indicates that Revelation is a book on the kingdom. Matthew contains the seed of the kingdom, the Epistles contain the growth of the seed, and Revelation contains the harvest of the seed of the kingdom.

What is the harvest of the kingdom? The first aspect of the harvest of the kingdom is the seven lampstands, and **the ultimate harvest of the kingdom will be the holy city, New Jerusalem.** The New Jerusalem is simply the harvest of the kingdom to the uttermost. In the New Jerusalem the kingdom will be fully manifested. Even the millennium will not be the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom. But **the New Jerusalem will be the ultimate consummation and fullest manifestation of the kingdom.**

The first few chapters of Revelation show us our participation in the kingdom. God's intention for the church is to have the kingdom, and for this **all His believers must be matured to the extent that they can live in the reality of the kingdom and bring in the manifestation of the kingdom.** We have seen previously that the manifestation of the kingdom will simply be the maturity and the ultimate growth of the kingdom life. When we live in the reality of the kingdom in its ultimate state, that will be the manifestation of the kingdom. God's purpose is to have the church, which can bring in His kingdom. **Many Christians have never seen God's purpose and God's goal. They think that God's purpose in the redemption of Christ is to enable people to go to heaven.** We all must come back to the pure word of the Bible to see that **the redemption of Christ is to bring in the kingdom.** The church in a normal way is simply the reality of the kingdom, and this reality will consummate in the manifestation of the kingdom.

Unfortunately, many real Christians have not seen this view and are short of this experience. **Most have fallen below the standard of the normal life.** Therefore, in the last book of the New Testament, Revelation, the Lord Jesus sounded forth a call not to the unbelievers but to the believers. Every believer has been called once by the Lord. But in Revelation 2 and 3 the Lord Jesus sent forth a **second calling to the believers, a calling to be overcomers.** We all have been called to believe, and we all have been called into the church life. But many are still short of the Lord's purpose and not up to the normal level that is adequate to bring in the manifestation of the kingdom. **Because so many are below the normal level, there is no possibility for them to grow in life.** Although the life of the Lord Jesus is within the believers, it has no possibility to grow, because they are below the normal level. Because of this, the Lord Jesus issued a call to the overcomers.

EPHESUS

Leaving Their First Love

In chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, in those epistles to the seven churches, the Lord Jesus issued a call to the overcomers. In His calling to the overcomers, the Lord Jesus revealed the proper condition of the church, which is for the kingdom. In 2:4 the Lord said to the church in Ephesus, **"I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love."** If we would be the proper church to bring in the kingdom, the Lord Jesus must be our first and best love. This is the first requirement. **We must take care of our love for the Lord.** Many Christians today have lost their first love toward the Lord. They are still good at working for the Lord and doing many things for the Lord, but they do not love the Lord as they did at the beginning. This means they have lost their first love, their original love, their best love, for the Lord. **They have works but no love.** Therefore, the Lord's first call to the overcomers is to come back and love Him supremely, to love Him the best. The Lord promised, **"To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God"** (v. 7). If we will come back to our first and best love for the Lord, we will be given to eat of the tree of life.

The Paradise of God

The tree of life is also in the New Jerusalem, which shows us that **the New Jerusalem is the real paradise of God.** The garden of Eden in Genesis 1 and 2 may be considered as the first paradise of God. In Luke 23 the Lord Jesus told the crucified thief that he would be with the Lord in Paradise. That Paradise is neither the garden of Eden nor the New Jerusalem but the joyful, comforting part of Hades, where the spirits of all the dead saints are being kept. This is the second Paradise of the Bible. Eventually, the people of God will be concentrated in the holy city, Jerusalem, and that will be the eternal Paradise with the tree of life in its center. The Lord's promise in Revelation 2 is that **if we will overcome the present situation and recover our first and best love toward Him, we will be given the right to enter the New Jerusalem as the Paradise of God and eat the tree of life as a reward.**

A Reward to the Overcomers

We must realize that the New Jerusalem with the tree of life in it will be a reward during the millennium. Not all the saved ones will get into the millennium. **Only the overcoming ones will enjoy the tree of life during the millennium.** During the thousand years of the millennium, the New Jerusalem as the Paradise of God will be a kind of reward. But after the millennium, in the new heaven and the new earth, the New Jerusalem will be a blessing to all the saved ones. **In the millennium it will be a reward to the overcomers,** but eventually it will be a common blessing to all God's people. During the millennium, the New Jerusalem will be the bride. But in the new heaven and the new earth, the New Jerusalem will be the wife. The bride is only for one day. On the first day of marriage, a young lady is the bride, but after that she is the wife. By the second day some of the freshness is gone. Although there is the joy, the joy is not so fresh. If we will not be the overcomers, we will not enjoy the freshness of the New Jerusalem in the millennium. We will miss that part. **After the millennium we will enjoy the New Jerusalem but not as a bride. We will enjoy the New Jerusalem only as a wife, in a common way.** The Lord's promise is that if we will be overcomers now, we will be given to eat of the tree of life in the New Jerusalem. This surely is during the time of the millennium. Each of the seven epistles in these two chapters of Revelation reveals to us something either as a reward or a kind of loss or punishment during the period of the millennium.

SMYRNA

Smyrna is the church that suffered persecution. If we all return to our first love for the Lord, surely the persecution will come. During the first, second, and third centuries, the church suffered much persecution. Satan used the Roman Empire to persecute the church and to kill many believers. Foxe's Book of Martyrs tells how many of these early Christians were persecuted and martyred for the sake of the Lord Jesus. **The Lord Jesus promised those persecuted ones that if they would overcome, they would receive the crown of life and not suffer the second death.** To be hurt of the second death does not mean to be lost, but it means to suffer something. Any kind of suffering will not be pleasant. Do not be concerned about the details concerning the second death. Simply take the warning from the Lord. The Lord Jesus does not give us the details because He does not expect us to be there. **He expects that we all would receive the crown of life.** Of course, the crown of life is not given today but is given during the time of the millennium. Regardless of how much you may suffer for the Lord Jesus today, you will not receive a crown in this age. Even the apostle Paul does not yet have his crown. He is still waiting for the

time of the millennium to receive his crown. At that time **all the overcomers will be the co-kings with Christ and receive a crown.**

PERGAMOS

Satan's persecution of the church was not successful. The more he persecuted the church, the stronger the Christians became. So he used a more subtle attack. At the beginning of the fourth century, during the time of Constantine, Satan changed his tactics. **He turned from persecuting to welcoming the church.** This is signified by the church in Pergamos. Pergamos literally means "marriage" and symbolically means "a fortified tower." **This signifies the church having a kind of evil marriage with the world and becoming something great.** Constantine brought the world into the church and took the church back into the world. This became an evil and illegal marriage. **The church was married to the world. Because the church was married to the world, it became something great as a fortified tower.**

This was the beginning of the great tree mentioned in Matthew 13. Within Pergamos there were the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:14-15). These teachings were a kind of evil leaven within the church. The Lord Jesus came in to call out the overcomers and to promise them two things: the hidden manna and a white stone. The stone is for building, and the white color indicates that it is approved and pleasant to the Lord. Upon the white stone there is a new name, which none besides yourself can know. Many times we should have some special experiences with the Lord that others cannot understand. Sometimes even our family cannot understand our experiences of the Lord. We experience something new and fresh that others cannot understand. The new name indicates fresh and new experiences of the Lord.

If we enjoy the Lord in a hidden way, He will become the hidden manna to us, and we will become a justified, approved stone that is so pleasant to the Lord for His building. We will enjoy the experiences that others cannot understand. This is the overcoming life for the kingdom. It may be that many dear ones in the local churches have become a white stone with a new name and are enjoying the real and rich experiences of the Lord. If so, they will enjoy the right and privilege to experience the Lord Jesus not as the open manna in the wilderness but as the hidden manna in the Holy of Holies. Within the Holy of Holies there was the Ark, and within the Ark there was the golden pot with the manna. The manna here is something very hidden and very close to God's presence. Because the overcomers are one with the Lord and so near to Him, they enjoy Him as the hidden manna. This enjoyment is for the kingdom.

THYATIRA

Following Pergamos, which indicates an illegal marriage of the church to the world, comes Thyatira. **Thyatira signifies the Roman Catholic Church, which is full of all kinds of corrupting leaven. The idols, the fornication, the evil teachings, and the practices of Jezebel are the leaven within the Roman Catholic Church.** This is the evil woman in Matthew 13 who hid the leaven in three measures of meal. The Lord also issued a call to the overcomers within Thyatira. He called them to overcome the fornication, the evil teachings, and all the evil practices. The lighting of the candles, the burning of the incense, and the worshipping of all the idols in the Roman Catholic Church are a real blasphemy to the Lord. Some might say that they received help from the Roman Catholic Church and that there have been many dear believers within the Roman Catholic Church. No doubt the Roman Catholic Church is gilded and covered with many precious persons and precious things. However, this is for cheating people. This is a false front. The outside of the cup is covered with gold, pearls, and precious stones, but the inside of the cup is full of abominations (Rev. 17:4). **We all must overcome the abominations—the idols, the spiritual fornication, and all kinds of leaven. We must hold to what the Lord has shown us.** Eventually, the overcomers will rule over the nations during the millennium.

Not All Believers Being Overcomers

We must see that being a believer is not equal to being an overcomer. Some Christian teachers have taught that all the real believers in the Lord Jesus will reign as kings. Concerning this point, I prefer not to answer doctrinally but experientially. I would like to ask them concerning their own situation. Do they have the appearance of kings? Is their daily life the living of kings? Have they been disciplined and trained, or are they loose and sloppy? Are they ready to be kings to reign with the Lord? I am afraid that when the Lord Jesus comes, they will say, "O Lord Jesus! I am not ready!"

If we would reign with the Lord Jesus as kings, we need to be trained and strictly disciplined by Him. The young man who will be the next king of England is daily and constantly under strict training and discipline. This training is so that he will be qualified to be the king. He is learning to look like a king, to talk like a king, and to behave like a king. How about yourself? Today you gossip, murmur, and are so loose. Are you ready to rule as a king? Are you qualified to be a king? By this we can see that **just to be a believer is not sufficient to be an overcomer and to rule and reign with Christ. We must be trained and disciplined by the Lord.** Otherwise, how can we rule over five cities or ten cities? (Luke 19:17, 19).

SARDIS

The church in Sardis represents **the church of the Reformation**. In a sense the Protestants of the reformed church are much better than the Catholics. However, the Lord says that, **although they were reformed and revived, they were still very weak.** In **Revelation 3:1** the Lord said that **Sardis had a name that they were living, but they were dead.** In verse 2 He said they needed to be watchful and establish the things which remained, which were about to die. The striking characteristic of the Protestant churches is that **they are short of life.** Many things may be right, but there is little life. Nearly everything with fundamental Christianity—the prayer, the Bible reading, the gospel preaching—is weak and about to die. Actually, they have little impact. However, the Lord said, **“You have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy”** (v. 4). The defiled garments indicate the presence of death or the absence of life. To be an overcomer in that kind of situation is to keep oneself from death.

This means that **we have to be alive and strong, and we must have an impact.** Even when we stand up to share a testimony, **we should not speak in a dead way.** Rather, we need to speak with our spirit strengthened and released. **We need to overcome the dead situation in Protestantism. We need to overcome all kinds of death. We need to wear a white garment, with no stain of death.** If this is our case, our name will not be erased from the book of life (v. 5). For a person's name to be erased from the book of life does not mean that he will be lost. It relates to the matter of reward or punishment. In order to understand the Bible we must always keep the basic principles. The principle concerning salvation is that it is eternal. **Once we are saved, we are saved eternally. We can never be lost.** Therefore, to have our name erased out of the book of life does not relate to the losing of salvation but to the **losing of a reward from the Lord.** If we would not overcome all kinds of dead situations and be living, we will suffer a loss.

PHILADELPHIA

The Lord Jesus did not rebuke Philadelphia for anything. Rather, He told them that **because they had kept His word and had not denied His name, He would keep them out of the hour of trial which was about to come on the earth.** This means that before the tribulation comes, He will take them away. Furthermore, **He will make them a pillar in God's temple.** In chapter 2 there is the white stone, and in chapter 3 there is the pillar built into the temple. **All the overcomers are for the building of God's temple, and this is for the kingdom.**

LAODICEA

The church in Laodicea is the **fallen and degraded church** in Philadelphia. **They are very proud, thinking that they have everything, that they know everything, and that they have seen everything. But in the eyes of the Lord they are poor and naked.** Therefore, the Lord advised them to buy gold and eyesalve so that they could see (3:18). They need to repent of their pride and open themselves to the Lord so that He can come in. Eventually, the overcomers among them will feast with the Lord and will sit with the Lord on His throne during the millennium.

GROWING FOR THE KINGDOM

From these seven epistles, we can see that whether we receive a reward or suffer a loss is related to the kingdom. These things are revealed so that we can fight and grow and go on for the manifestation of the kingdom. We are growing today for the manifestation of the kingdom. We are fighting today for the manifestation of the kingdom. Even the Lord Jesus' coming back is related to the manifestation of the kingdom. We may talk much about the Lord's coming and the prophecies related to it, but **if we do not grow, He cannot come back. We need to fight the battle to gain the maturity.** By the growing and the fighting, a man-child will be delivered according to Revelation 12, and there will be the declaration that the kingdom of the Lord has come because the accuser has been cast

down by the overcoming ones. Today the Lord Jesus is calling to the overcomers, and He is waiting for our cooperation. We all have to say, “Lord Jesus, I answer Your calling. Lord Jesus, I will love You, I will be faithful to death, and I will never get into any part of the great tree. I will overcome all the leaven in Catholicism and all the deadness of today’s Protestantism. I will keep Your living word and confess Your precious name. I will keep myself from spiritual pride. Lord, keep me feasting with You and You with me.” If we will grow, we will overcome and will bring in the manifestation of the kingdom. The manifestation of the kingdom will not come in an accidental way but in a gradual way by our growth. Hallelujah! Today we are on the way to the harvest of the manifestation of the kingdom in Revelation!

(The Kingdom, Chapter 46)