

REVELATION

Message Three

The Firstfruits, the Harvest, and the Late Overcomers

Scripture Reading: Rev. 14:1-5, 14-16; 15:2-4

I. The rapture is not mainly for our enjoyment but for God's enjoyment; we need to be raptured to heaven, not for our happiness but for the fulfillment of God's purpose—12:5, 7-10; 14:1, 4b:

- A. The meaning of rapture is to be taken into the Lord's presence; in order to be taken into the Lord's presence, we must be in His presence today—Luke 21:36; 2 Cor. 2:10.
- B. The rapture is for defeating the enemy and satisfying God—Rev. 12:5; 14:1, 4b:
 - 1. God has a need for us to be raptured; we must be raptured to heaven that we may fight against the enemy—12:5, 7-11.
 - 2. The Lord needs the man-child to fight against His enemy, but He needs the firstfruits even more for His satisfaction—14:1, 4b.
- C. The Bible reveals two aspects of the rapture: the rapture of the overcomers and the rapture of the majority of the believers—Matt. 24:40-41; Luke 21:36; Rev. 3:10; 1 Thes. 4:15-17; Rev. 12:5; 14:1.
- D. In Leviticus 23:10 we see a type of the rapture—the type of the crop ripening in the field—Matt. 13:24; Rev. 14:14-16:
 - 1. The reaping of God's crop is what we call the rapture; this reaping indicates that the believers will be taken away from the earth—Matt. 13:30, 39b.
 - 2. Part of the crop—the firstfruits—ripens earlier and is reaped earlier; the rest of the crop—the harvest—ripens later and is reaped later.
 - 3. According to Revelation 14 there are two kinds of rapture—the rapture of the firstfruits and the rapture of the harvest—vv. 4b, 14-15.

II. The firstfruits in Revelation 14:1-5 are the living overcomers who will be the first ripe ones in God's field; hence, they will be reaped

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before the harvest as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb:

- A. The firstfruits will be caught up to the heavenly Mount Zion, to the place of God's dwelling in the third heaven, in order to be in the presence of God and Christ—14:1, 4b.
- B. The firstfruits are raptured to the house of God in Zion as the fresh enjoyment to God; this is for God's satisfaction—Exo. 23:19a; Lev. 23:10; cf. John 20:17a:
 - 1. The firstfruits satisfy the hunger of God the Father and the Lamb, the Redeemer.
 - 2. Whereas the man-child is for fighting to deal with the enemy, the firstfruits are for the satisfaction of God and the Lamb.
- C. The firstfruits are believers who are saturated with Christ; they have been fully occupied by Christ and taken over by Christ—Eph. 3:16-17a; Gal. 4:19.
- D. The firstfruits have the name of the Lamb and of His Father written on their foreheads; this is the designation of their being one with the Lamb and with the Father and of their belonging to Them—Rev. 14:1b.
- E. The one hundred forty-four thousand firstfruits are believers who are for the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose—v. 1:
 - 1. The number twelve signifies the mingling of divinity with humanity; this mingling is for the completion of God's economy.
 - 2. Twelve multiplied by twelve means completion of completions, the completion in God's administration for the fulfillment of His economy.
- F. The firstfruits are the earliest ones among God's crop to reach maturity—Heb. 5:14—6:1; 1 Cor. 2:6; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15:
 - 1. To be transformed is to be changed in our natural life; to be matured is to be filled with the divine life that changes us—Rom. 12:2; Eph. 3:19b.

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2. For God's expression there is the need of maturity; only a mature life can bear God's image and exercise His dominion—Gen. 1:26.

III. The harvest in Revelation 14:14-16 is the rapture of the majority of the believers:

- A. Whereas the firstfruits are taken to the throne in the heavens before the great tribulation, the harvest is taken to the air (the barn—Matt. 13:30; 3:12) toward the end of the tribulation, that is, at the last trumpet—1 Thes. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 10:7.
- B. All those included in the rapture of the harvest must pass through the greater part of the great tribulation—Matt. 24:21; Rev. 3:10:
 1. The harvest will be left to pass through the great tribulation because green, unripened fields need strong sunshine to ripen—14:15; Matt. 13:39b.
 2. In a sense, the great tribulation will be the strong sunshine which will ripen all the believers who were not ready before the tribulation.
- C. If today we do not give up the world and live to Christ, Christ will leave us on earth to pass through the great tribulation—Matt. 16:26; 2 Cor. 5:14-15:
 1. At that time the believers will give up the world and realize that the best way to live is to live to Christ—James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17; Rom 14:7-8.
 2. The time will come when all the believers will realize that they need to ripen and mature—Mark 4:26-29; 1 Cor. 3:1-2; 14:20; Col. 1:28.
- D. The harvest will be reaped by the Son of Man; He came as the Son of Man to sow the seed, and He will come again as the Son of Man to reap what He has sown—Matt. 13:37; Rev. 14:14.
- E. Regarding the rapture, we all need to receive the warning and to see God's purpose and our responsibility to cooperate with Him—2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 16:15.

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IV. Revelation 15:2-4 unveils the rapture of the late overcomers, who overcome Antichrist, his mark, the number of his name, and his image:

- A. Although they are slain by Antichrist, in the eyes of God they are victorious.
- B. The late overcomers sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb—v. 3a:
 - 1. The song of Moses indicates God's triumphant judgment over the enemy of His people—Exo. 15:1-18.
 - 2. The song of the Lamb indicates Christ's redemption experienced by God's people in the presence of their enemy.
- C. The late overcomers praise God for His works and His ways, that is, for His acts and His principles—Rev. 15:3b-4; Psa. 103:7.