

Message Two

Making Ourselves Ready for the Lord's Coming by Growing in Life unto Maturity

Scripture Reading: Heb. 6:1; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:27-29; 4:12; Rev. 14:1-5

I. In his Epistle, James uses the illustration of a farmer awaiting with long-suffering the precious fruit of the earth—5:7:

- A. The Lord Jesus is actually the real Farmer, the unique Farmer—Matt. 13:3.
- B. While we are awaiting with long-suffering the Lord's coming, He, as the real Farmer, is awaiting with patience our maturity in life as the firstfruits and the harvest of the field—Rev. 14:4, 14-15.
- C. If we pray, "Lord, come back quickly," the Lord may say, "While you are awaiting My coming back, I am awaiting your maturity; only your maturity can hasten My coming back."
- D. It is a great help for us to realize that if we are serious about awaiting the Lord's coming back, we need to grow in life unto maturity.

II. To be mature is to have Christ formed in us—Gal. 4:19:

- A. Christ was born in us when we believed into Him (John 3:6, 15-16), He lives in us in our Christian life (Gal. 2:20b), and He will be formed in us at our maturity (4:19):
 - 1. The last stage of transformation is maturity, the fullness of life:
 - a. God's eternal purpose can be accomplished only through our transformation and maturity—Gen. 1:26; Col. 1:28; 2:19; 4:12.
 - b. Maturity is a matter of having the divine life imparted into us again and again until we have the fullness of life—John 10:10b.
 - 2. Maturity is a matter of the enlargement of capacity—Psa. 4:1:
 - a. Maturity in life is the sum total of receiving the discipline of the Holy Spirit—Heb. 12:5-11.
 - b. Others may see a person who has matured in life, but they cannot see the accumulated discipline of the Holy Spirit which that person has received secretly day by day throughout the years—2 Cor. 1:8-10; Gen. 47:7, 10.
 - 3. God will sovereignly use persons, things, and events to empty us of everything that has filled us and to take away every preoccupation so that we may have an increased capacity to be filled with God—Luke 1:53; Matt. 5:6.
- B. Christ being formed in us is needed that we may mature in the divine sonship and be sons of full age—Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 8:15; Eph. 1:5:
 - 1. Since the time of our regeneration, the Lord has been working in us so that we may have His image—2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29.
 - 2. When the Lord has fully worked His image into us and is fully expressed through us, we will be mature in life—Eph. 3:16-17.
- C. As used in the New Testament, the word *mature* refers to the believers' being full-grown, mature, and perfected in the life of God, which they received at the time of regeneration:

1. We should never be content with ourselves but should pursue growth and maturity in the life of Christ; we need to go on, to be brought on, to maturity by forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, pursuing toward the fullest enjoyment and gaining of Christ for the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom—Phil. 3:12-15.
2. The prerequisite for maturity in the spiritual life is to grow continually in the divine life—Eph. 4:15.
3. The ultimate issue of the believers' growth and maturity in the life of Christ is the full-grown man—the church as the Body of Christ growing into a mature man—v. 13.

III. The goal of Paul's ministry was to present every man mature, full-grown, in Christ for the one new man—Col. 1:28-29; 3:10-11:

- A. The Greek word rendered "full-grown" in 1:28 may also be translated "perfect," "complete," or "mature."
- B. Paul's ministry was to dispense Christ into others so that they would be perfect and complete by maturing in Christ unto full growth—Eph. 4:13.
- C. The more we get into Christ, the more He comes into us; and the more He comes into us, the more we get into Him; it is by this cycle that we grow in life—Col. 1:27-28.
- D. Our goal in preaching the gospel to sinners and in fellowshiping with the saints is to minister Christ into them so that they may mature in life and be presented full-grown in Him—3:10-11; Eph. 4:13-14.

IV. To be ready for rapture we need the maturity in life—Matt. 24:40-41:

- A. The rapture is the consummating step of God's full salvation in life—the transfiguration, the redemption, of our body—Rom. 5:10; 8:23; Phil. 3:21:
 1. Because of the demand of the divine life that we have received and because of the intensity of our love toward the Lord, we desire to pursue a life that awaits the Lord's coming—1 Thes. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23.
 2. As we love the Lord and await His coming, we hope to be raptured to the presence of the Lord—Matt. 24:40-41; Luke 17:31-36; 21:36.
- B. To become matured is not an overnight matter; for the Lord's coming, we need to prepare ourselves, love Him, and grow in Him so that at His appearing we may be mature to be raptured—Rev. 14:1-5.
- C. Marks of maturity include the following—Heb. 6:1:
 1. Being filled with the divine life that changes us—Eph. 3:19.
 2. Reigning in life—Rom. 5:17.
 3. Being able to eat solid food—Heb. 5:12-14.
 4. Being full-grown in understanding—1 Cor. 14:20.
 5. Being perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect—Matt. 5:48.
 6. Seeing the Body, knowing the Body, living in the Body and for the Body, caring for the Body, and honoring the Body—Eph. 4:13-16.