

Message Five

The Birthright

Scripture Reading: Gen. 25:29-34;
Luke 4:16-19; Heb. 12:16, 23

- I. Since God created man to express Him with His image and to represent Him by exercising His dominion over all things, by birth every human being has a birthright—the right by birth to express God and represent Him; however, every fallen person has sold this birthright by being independent of God—Gen. 1:26; 4:16-17; 10:8-11.**
- II. In the Bible the birthright is the special portion of the firstborn; according to the Bible as a whole, the birthright includes a double portion of the land, the priesthood, and the kingship—1 Chron. 5:1-2; Deut. 33:8-10; Gen. 49:10.**
- III. Before the foundation of the world, God chose and predestinated Jacob to have the birthright—Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 9:10-13:**
 - A. This birthright, which God intends to give to His chosen people, includes expressing God, representing God, and participating in the kingdom of God—Gen. 1:26; Rev. 20:4, 6.
 - B. In Esau's despising the birthright and in Jacob's buying it, God exercised His sovereignty to fulfill the purpose of His selection—Gen. 25:22-26, 29-34.
 - C. The shifting of the birthright from Esau to Jacob reveals that receiving the birthright is a matter of God's predestination and sovereignty, not of our natural birth or endeavoring—Rom. 9:10-13.
 - D. Although Jacob had gained the birthright, he did not enjoy it until he was transformed from a supplanter into a prince of God and became mature; thus, Jacob is an example of enjoying the birthright in his maturity—Gen. 32:28; 35:10.
- IV. God had intended to give the birthright to Reuben, the firstborn, but Reuben lost it because of his defilement; the birthright was shifted from Reuben to Joseph, who fled from that kind of defilement and received a double portion of the land—39:7-12; 49:3-4; 1 Chron. 5:1.**
- V. According to Deuteronomy 20:1-20 and 21:15-17, spiritually speaking, fighting and the birthright are related, for only by fighting can we preserve our birthright:**

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- A. Since we preserve our birthright by fighting, if we do not fight, we will lose our birthright, even as Esau lost his birthright—Heb. 12:16-17.
- B. As we are fighting for our birthright, we must learn to trust in the Lord, not in ourselves, and realize that we are fighting for what He has given us—Josh. 1:2-9.
- C. It is our duty to fight, but we can fulfill this duty only by faith in the Lord, believing that He has ordained us to fight and that He will fight for us—23:3, 10; Eph. 6:10-11.

VI. The book of Ruth shows us how Boaz (a type of Christ) redeemed both Ruth (a type of the church in redemption) and her birthright—1:16-18; 2:1; 3:2, 9-11; 4:1-17:

- A. The birthright includes the right and position to enjoy Christ with the privileges to be a priest to bring man to God and to be a king to bring God to man—Eph. 3:8; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 5:10.
- B. Boaz treasured the God-given birthright and was concerned not only for his own birthright but also for that of others; he paid the price to redeem his kinsman's inheritance and married his kinsman's widow—Ruth 4:1-17.
- C. It was due to Boaz's compassion on the poor and weak Ruth and his redemption of her birthright that David, the king who established the kingdom, was brought in—v. 17.

VII. In Matthew 21:28-31 we see the shifting of the birthright from Israel to the church:

- A. In Luke 15:1-2 and 11-32 the Lord likened the leaders of Judaism to the firstborn son and likened the tax collectors and sinners to the second son, but in Matthew 21:28-31 the Lord likened them in the opposite order.
- B. This indicates that the Jews were the firstborn of God (Exo. 4:22) and had the birthright; however, because of their unbelief the birthright was shifted to the church, which has become God's firstborn (Heb. 12:23).

VIII. For the believers in Christ, the lost birthright has been recovered in the New Testament jubilee—Luke 4:16-19:

- A. The jubilee is "the acceptable year of the Lord," the fulfillment of the jubilee in Leviticus 25.

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- B. In our fallen life we lost everything, including our birthright and status, and we became slaves in captivity; we lost the right to enjoy our portion of Christ as the good land—Deut. 8:7-9; Col. 1:12.
- C. The proclamation of the jubilee, the real and whole gospel, is a proclamation of release from slavery and of the recovery of our spiritual birthright; our lost birthright has been redeemed, recovered, and restored—Luke 4:16-19.
- D. We need to spread the jubilee—the gospel of the New Testament, the proclamation of the release of the captives and of the recovery of the lost birthright—9:1-6; 24:47; Acts 26:18:
 - 1. As revealed in the Gospel of Luke, the mingling of the divine nature with its attributes and the human nature with its virtues to produce the highest standard of morality is for the New Testament jubilee—1:35.
 - 2. In this jubilee we are freed from all bondage—the bondage of sin, Satan, the world, and the self—and we are freed into the full enjoyment of our lost birthright, the right to enjoy the Triune God in Christ—2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:16-17.

IX. Hebrews 12:16 warns the believers not to be like “Esau, who for one meal gave up his own birthright”:

- A. Esau’s birthright as the firstborn son of Isaac was the double portion of the land, the priesthood, and the kingship.
- B. Because of Esau’s profaneness in giving up his birthright, the double portion of the land was given to Joseph (1 Chron. 5:1-2), the priesthood was passed to Levi (Deut. 33:8-11), and the kingship was assigned to Judah (Gen. 49:10; 1 Chron. 5:2).
- C. Hebrews 12:23 speaks of “the church of the firstborn”:
 - 1. We Christians, born of God, are the firstfruits of His creatures that He has reaped in His creation—James 1:18.
 - 2. In this sense, we are the firstborn sons of God; hence, the church, composed of us, is called the church of the firstborn—Heb. 12:23.
 - 3. As the firstborn sons of God, we have the birthright; this includes the inheritance of the earth (2:5-6), the priesthood (Rev. 20:6), and the kingship (v. 4), which will be the main blessings in the coming kingdom and which the profane,

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world-loving-and-seeking Christians will lose at the Lord's coming back.

4. Eventually, this birthright will be a reward given to the overcoming Christians in the millennial kingdom—22:12; 11:18.
- D. Today what we are privileged to enjoy in Christ is the foretaste of the blessings in the coming kingdom—Eph. 3:8; Rom. 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9:
1. If we do not enjoy Christ today as our good land, we cannot enter into His rest in the kingdom and inherit the earth with Him—Heb. 4:9.
 2. If we do not exercise our priesthood today to contact the Lord and prayerfully minister to Him, we cannot fulfill our priestly duty in the kingdom—1 Pet. 2:5, 9.
 3. If we do not exercise our spirit with the God-given authority to rule our self, our flesh, our entire being, and the enemy with all his power of darkness today, we cannot be Christ's co-kings and rule the nations with Him in His kingdom—Rom. 5:17, 21; Rev. 2:26-27.
 4. Our enjoyment of Christ and the practice of the priesthood and kingship today are the preparation and qualification for our participating in Christ's kingdom in the coming age—1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 5:10; 20:4, 6.