

Message Nine

The Lamb Whom the Overcoming Firstfruits Follow

Scripture Reading: Rev. 14:1-5; Gen. 5:22-24; Heb. 11:5-6; Matt. 24:45-51

I. Revelation 14:1-5 reveals Christ as the Lamb whom the overcoming firstfruits follow:

- A. The firstfruits are the living overcomers, who will be the first ripe ones in God's field; hence, they will be reaped before the harvest as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb:
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. 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; Hosea 6:2; 2 Tim. 4:8; Acts 26:16.
 - 3. The rapture is for defeating the enemy and satisfying God; the Lord needs the man-child to fight against His enemy, but He needs the firstfruits even more for His satisfaction and enjoyment—Rev. 12:5; 14:1, 4b.
- B. The Bible reveals two aspects of the rapture: the rapture of the overcomers before the great tribulation and the rapture of the majority of the believers at the end of the great tribulation—Matt. 24:40-41; Luke 21:36; Rev. 3:10; 1 Thes. 4:15-17; Rev. 12:5; 14:1.
- C. 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, 14-16.
- D. 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.
- E. The firstfruits have the name of the Lamb and the name 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.
- F. The firstfruits are the earliest 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.
 - 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; Rom. 5:10, 17, 21.

II. In order for us to follow the Lamb and go on to maturity to become the firstfruits, we must walk with God by faith to escape death and obtain the testimony of being well pleasing to God:

- A. The way to escape death and obtain the testimony of being well pleasing to God is to walk with God—Gen. 5:22-24; Heb. 11:5-6:
 - 1. To walk with God is not to override God, not to be presumptuous, not to do things according to our own concept and desire, not to do things according to the current of the age, and not to do anything without God—cf. Psa. 19:12-13; Josh. 9:14b; Luke 24:15.

2. To walk with God is to take Him as our center and everything, to live and do things according to God and with God, according to His revelation and leading, and to do everything with Him—Rom. 8:4, 13-14; Gal. 2:2a; 2 Cor. 5:14-15.
 3. To walk with God means that we do not live by what we are or can do but by the immortal life, which is Christ Himself—vv. 4, 9.
 4. To walk with God is to have habitual fellowship with God, to be in constant touch with the Lord, and to be under His constant infusion—1 John 1:3; Phil. 4:6; 2 Cor. 3:16, 18.
 5. To walk with God is to continually exercise our spirit to enjoy the Blessed Trinity—Jude 14, 19-21.
 6. To walk with God implies the denying of our self and everything that is of our self so that we may be one with Him; it implies that we have given ourselves to Him, that we will give in to Him and let Him take the lead—Matt. 16:24-25; 2 Cor. 2:13-14.
- B. To walk with God is to walk by faith—5:7; Heb. 11:5-6:
1. Faith means that we believe that God is—vv. 1-2, 6; 2 Cor. 4:13, 18:
 - a. Without faith it is impossible to please God, to make God happy—Heb. 11:6a.
 - b. To believe that God is, is to believe that He is everything to us and that we are nothing—John 8:58; Eccl. 1:2.
 - c. To believe that God is implies that we are not; He must be the only One, the unique One, in everything, and we must be nothing in everything—Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5.
 - d. To believe that God is, is to deny our self; in the whole universe He is, and all of us are nothing—Luke 9:23.
 - e. I should not be anything; I should not exist; only He should exist—it is no longer I, but Christ—Gal. 2:20.
 - f. At his conversion the Lord told Saul of Tarsus, “I am Jesus”—Acts 9:5:
 - (1) The Lord was saying, “I am the great I Am; I am the One who is; you must believe that I am and that you are not.”
 - (2) Eventually, Saul was over, and Paul came up—13:9.
 - g. This is faith—“O the joy of having nothing and being nothing, seeing nothing but a living Christ in glory, and being careful for nothing but His interests down here”—J. N. Darby.
 2. Faith means that we believe that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him—Heb. 11:6; Gen. 15:1; Phil. 3:8, 14:
 - a. Enoch’s reward was the highest degree of life—escape from death—Heb. 11:5a; 2 Cor. 5:4; Rom. 8:6, 10-11; 5:17.
 - b. The Lord is a rewarder, and we need to be His seekers—Psa. 27:4, 8; 42:1-2; 43:4; 73:25; 119:2, 10.
- C. Enoch, as the first person to be raptured, is the representative of all the overcomers who will be raptured while they are living—Matt. 24:37-51; Rev. 14:1; Luke 21:34-36:
1. Our being raptured depends on our being mature in the divine life by our walking with God—Heb. 6:1a.
 2. Enoch continually walked upward with God day and night for three centuries, becoming closer to God and more one with God each day until “he was not, for God took him”—Gen. 5:24; cf. S. S. 8:5a.

III. In order for us to follow the Lamb and go on to maturity to become the firstfruits, we must be faithful in service in the Lord’s commission to give God as food to the members of His household so that we may win Christ as our reward in the coming kingdom—Matt. 24:45-51:

- A. God has a household and a household administration, an economy, to dispense Himself as food to the members of His household for His expression—1 Tim. 1:4; 3:15; Eph. 2:19.
- B. God has set faithful and prudent slaves over His household as household administrators, stewards, channels of supply, to give His people food at the proper time—Matt. 24:45; 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:10; Phil. 1:25.
- C. *Give them food* refers to ministering the word of God and Christ as the life supply to the believers in the church; Christ as the life-giving Spirit is our food, embodied and realized in the word of life—John 6:57, 63, 68; Acts 5:20:
 - 1. In order to enjoy the Lord as our spiritual food so that we can feed others, we must pray over and muse on His word, tasting and enjoying it through careful considering—Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15; Ezek. 3:1-4.
 - 2. We must devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word—Acts 6:4; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8; John 7:37-39; cf. Heb. 7:25; 8:2.
- D. To say in our heart that our Master delays is to love the present evil age and not to love the Lord's appearing—Matt. 24:48; 2 Tim. 4:8, 10; cf. Acts 26:16:
 - 1. We must beware of covetousness, not storing up treasure for ourselves but being rich toward God—Luke 12:15-20; 2 Cor. 6:10; Eph. 3:8.
 - 2. "Remember Lot's wife" is a solemn warning to the world-loving believers—Luke 17:31-32; cf. Rom. 1:21, 25.
 - 3. We must be watchful and beseeching so that the day of the Lord's coming would not come upon us suddenly as a snare—Luke 21:34-36; cf. Matt. 2:3.
- E. To beat our fellow slaves is to mistreat our fellow believers—24:49a; 18:3-7; Acts 9:4:
 - 1. We must not judge and condemn our fellow believers but be kind to them, tender-hearted, forgiving them, even as God in Christ forgave us—Luke 6:37; Eph. 4:31-32.
 - 2. We must not revile or criticize our brothers but consider them more excellent than ourselves—1 Cor. 6:10; Phil. 2:2-3, 29:
 - a. To revile a brother is to criticize or demean him harshly with abusive language—cf. Luke 17:2.
 - b. Those who take in reviling words bear the same responsibility as those who speak reviling words; such words damage the Body.
 - c. God will never entrust authority to those who by nature like to criticize others.
 - 3. We must not lord it over our fellow believers but serve them as a slave to feed them with the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit—1 Pet. 5:3; Matt. 20:25-28:
 - a. For one to lord it over the saints means that he replaces the Lord in their lives by making decisions for them or by telling them where to move, thus, insulting the headship and lordship of Christ.
 - b. If we tell others where they should go without encouraging them to pray, seek the Lord's leading, and have the proper fellowship in the Body, this is a great insult to the Lord!
- F. To eat and drink with the drunken is to keep company with worldly people, who are drunk with worldly things—24:49b; cf. Eph. 5:18:
 - 1. Because of their divine nature and holy standing, the believers should not be yoked together with the unbelievers; this should be applied to all intimate relationships between believers and unbelievers, not only to marriage and business—2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 15:33; cf. Prov. 13:20.
 - 2. We must flee youthful lusts and pursue the all-inclusive Christ with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart—2 Tim. 2:22.