

## Entering into the Kingdom of the Heavens (2)

The following article is excerpted from Chapter 48 of *Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 5*, by Witness Lee, published by Living Stream Ministry. Further portions of this chapter will appear in the next issue of *Affirmation & Critique*.

### The Conditions for Entering the Kingdom of the Heavens

We need to see the conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens. How can we enter the kingdom of the heavens? What responsibility should we bear for entering the kingdom of the heavens? The New Testament speaks much about this matter, and we must look at this matter point by point.

#### *Repenting and Bearing Fruit Worthy of Repentance*

##### 1. “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near” (Matt. 3:2; 4:17).

The first person to speak of the kingdom of the heavens was John the Baptist, and the first word he spoke about the kingdom of the heavens was *repent*. The first word the Lord spoke when He began to preach concerning the kingdom of the heavens also was *repent*. Therefore, repentance is the first condition for entering the kingdom of the heavens. Without repentance, we cannot enter the kingdom of the heavens.

**T**o *repent* in the original Greek means “to change one’s mind.” After man fell, he turned his back on God and the heavens and turned to the earth. Since the fall he has been controlled by his mind without any restriction by God, and he does not obey heavenly authority or submit to heavenly control. Therefore, if we want to enter the kingdom of the heavens, obey heavenly authority, and submit to heavenly control, we must have a change in our mind that causes our life to turn in the opposite direction; that is, we must turn from Satan to God, from earth to the heavens, and from indulgence in lawlessness to obedience to heavenly authority with submission to heavenly control. The kingdom of the heavens is divine, heavenly, and spiritual; it is also righteous, holy, full of authority, and according to law. However, man is satanic, earthly, and fleshly; he is also evil, filthy, rebellious, and

lawless. Man’s nature is absolutely opposed to the kingdom of the heavens. Thus, if we want to enter the kingdom of the heavens, we must repent and have a thorough change of mind.

If we want to enter the kingdom of the heavens, we need more than a one-time repentance only; we need a continual repentance, a constant change in our mind. Moment by moment we need to turn from ourselves to God, from earth to the heavens, from the flesh to the spirit, from disobedience and lawlessness to submission and righteousness. If we continually repent in this way, we will be able to submit to the heavenly authority today and enter the kingdom of the heavens in the coming age.

##### 2. “Produce then fruit worthy of your repentance” (Matt. 3:8).

If we would enter the kingdom of the heavens, we must not only repent in our heart but also produce fruit worthy of repentance. We must have a change not only of mind but also of expression. It is not enough simply to have a repentant heart; we must also produce outward fruit worthy of repentance.

**P**roducing fruit worthy of repentance touches matters involving both negative and positive things. On the negative side, it means that we must deal with sin. Everything that offends others must be confessed, and we must ask for forgiveness. All that we owe to others must be returned to the best of our ability, and we must clear our debts. On the positive side, it means that we must give ourselves to God to do His will, obey His authority, submit to His control, and live for Him. A person who has repented in his heart must have outward fruit worthy of repentance in order to enter the kingdom of the heavens.

#### *Being Poor in Spirit*

##### 1. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens” (Matt. 5:3).

Man is proud and often self-satisfied. However, the things of the kingdom of the heavens are not based on anything of man. Those who want to participate in the kingdom of the heavens must be poor in spirit. A proud,

self-satisfied person who justifies himself has no part in the kingdom of the heavens. We must see that our spiritual condition is poor and pitiful, we must feel empty and desolate before the Lord, and we must humbly seek Him in order to participate in the kingdom of the heavens. Whenever we are proud and self-satisfied, we are not in the kingdom of the heavens. We must allow the Holy Spirit to do an emptying work in us to cause us to be hungry and thirsty, desiring spiritual things and pursuing the growth in life, in order to enter the reality of the kingdom of the heavens and to participate in the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens.

### *Being Persecuted for the Sake of Righteousness*

1. **“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens”** (Matt. 5:10).

The kingdom of the heavens is righteousness, and the kingdom is where God carries out His righteousness and exercises His authority. Therefore, if we want to participate in the kingdom of the heavens, we must be righteous and even be willing to be persecuted for the sake of righteousness, that is, to be persecuted for holding on to righteousness. The

world today and everything in it is evil. We are in this world, but we stand before God in a position of righteousness. As we live in a condition of righteousness, we will certainly meet with opposition and persecution. But it is only by being persecuted for the sake of righteousness that we can participate in the righteous kingdom of God. If we cannot suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness in this evil world today, we cannot reign because of righteousness in God’s righteous kingdom. We must hold to righteousness in an unrighteous age and suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness in order for us to carry out God’s righteousness in the coming righteous age.

### *Having Surpassing Righteousness*

1. **“Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens”** (Matt. 5:20).

The kingdom of the heavens is surpassingly righteous, so those who would enter into it must have a righteousness

that surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees. The righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees is of the law, of the letter, and dead; the righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees is of life, of the Spirit, and living. The righteousness of the law speaks of not killing, which is something outward; however, the righteousness of the kingdom speaks of not even being angry or hating, which is something inward. The righteousness of the law speaks of not committing adultery, but the righteousness of the kingdom speaks of not even lusting, which is a matter of our inward thoughts. The righteousness of the law does not break an oath; in contrast, the righteousness of the kingdom does not even swear, but simply says yes for yes and no for no. The righteousness of the law takes an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but the righteousness of the kingdom does not resist evil people. When someone slaps the right cheek, the left is turned as well. When someone takes

the inner garment, the outer garment is given as well. The righteousness of the law loves its neighbor and hates its enemy, but the righteousness of the kingdom loves both neighbors and enemies, prays for persecutors, loves as God loves, and is perfect as God is perfect. The righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees is according to law and in outward actions;

it is of the letter and weak. However, the righteousness that is a condition for entering the kingdom of the heavens is the righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees. It surpasses the law, it is according to life, and it is lived out from within. It is spiritual and living, and it surpasses the requirements of the letter of the law to match God’s divine nature. The Lord Jesus said that if we want to enter the kingdom of the heavens, our righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and the Pharisees. This kind of surpassing righteousness is not obtained by faith in Christ but through living Christ.

**I**n the Bible clothing typifies righteousness (Isa. 64:6). Matthew 22:11 speaks of a “wedding garment,” and Revelation 19:8 speaks of “fine linen.” Both of these verses refer to the surpassing righteousness that is a condition for entering the kingdom of the heavens. These verses show that a surpassing righteousness is required in order to attend Christ’s wedding feast, which is the feast of the kingdom of the heavens. If we want to enter the kingdom of the heavens as the bride of Christ and attend

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Christ's wedding feast, we must live by the life of Christ today and live out His surpassing righteousness as our "wedding garment" and as our "fine linen" in order to see Him.

### *Doing the Will of God*

1. "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens" (Matt. 7:21).

The kingdom of the heavens is for God's rule and for the carrying out of His will. Therefore, if we want to participate in the kingdom of the heavens, we must also do the will of God. A person who has no consideration for God's will and who does not submit to the heavenly authority or accept the ruling of the kingdom of the heavens cannot enter into the kingdom of the heavens. In order to diligently take care of God's will, we must put ourselves aside and deny our interests and desires. We should not care for our own enjoyment and glory; instead, we must wholeheartedly pursue God's delight and acceptance, not caring for the desires or praises of man. This should be our attitude in matters related not only to our daily living but even more in preaching the Word, in casting out demons, and in doing works for the Lord. Doing the will of God is necessary for entering into the kingdom of the heavens. It does not matter how much we preach the gospel, how many demons we cast out, or how many works of power we do; what is important is whether we do the will of God. Preaching the gospel, casting out demons, and doing works of power can all be done according to our own desires, but in order to do the will of God, we must put ourselves aside. Only those who do God's will in their actions will be able to accomplish God's heart's desire. If we want to enter the kingdom of the heavens in its manifestation, we must do God's will today.

### *Living in the Reality of the Kingdom of the Heavens*

Matthew 5:3, 10, 20, and 7:21 are not the only portions that speak of conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens. Actually, the Lord's entire speaking on the mountain in Matthew 5—7 presents conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens. In chapter 5 these include matters such as mourning, being meek, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, being merciful, broad, and gracious toward others, being pure in heart toward God and wanting only God, being a peacemaker, rejoicing when being reproached or persecuted for the Lord's sake, being the salt of the earth and eliminating corruption, being a light in this dark age to dispel the darkness, not being angry in the flesh, forgiving others and asking their forgiveness, not following one's choice in the matter of witnessing, and pursuing perfection. In chapter 6 these include giving alms, praying and fasting in secret to serve God, praying

for the Lord's grace and seeking the Lord Himself by spending time to obtain the Lord's presence and to live before Him, sanctifying God's name and looking for the coming of God's kingdom, not enjoying the world or the things in the world, not being touched by earthly riches, not being anxious for clothing or food, serving God, relying on God, and living in God to pursue His kingdom. In chapter 7 these include not judging others, not counting the faults of others and not overlooking one's own faults, being restricted by the Holy Spirit and being willing to treat others as one would want to be treated, entering by the narrow gate and walking on the straight way, not blindly following others, and always living and acting by the Lord's word. These preceding points are requirements for entering the kingdom of the heavens because they are the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. Living in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens is a condition for entering into the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens.

Only those who live in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens today will enter into the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens. Only those who are not touched by earthly things today will enjoy the kingdom of the heavens. Only those who are restricted by the heavens and who submit to the heavenly authority will reign in the kingdom of the heavens and rule over others. Only those who are selfless and conquer their fleshly temper today will rule the nations in the kingdom of the heavens in the future.

If we are in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens and are restricted by the heavens, we are in the kingdom of the heavens today, and the kingdom of the heavens is ours. The Lord said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens" (5:3), and "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens" (v. 10). The Bible speaks of the kingdom of the heavens being ours today; it does not speak of it as being only in the future. If we are in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens today, we will enter into the kingdom of the heavens in the future. Living in the kingdom of the heavens today is a condition for entering the kingdom of the heavens in the future.

### *Taking the Kingdom by Violence*

1. "The kingdom of the heavens is taken by violence, and violent men seize it" (Matt. 11:12).

God's opponent Satan uses many methods to frighten or frustrate people so that they cannot enter the kingdom of the heavens. Thus, if people want to enter into the kingdom of the heavens, they must take it by violence. With respect to God, the kingdom of the heavens is something we should seek; with respect to Satan, the kingdom of the heavens is something we should take violently. A

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person who is fearful and easily frightened, who shrinks from everything, and who is cowardly and afraid to pay a price cannot enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Only those who are willing to be violent to take the kingdom can seize the kingdom of the heavens.

***Denying the Self, Taking Up the Cross, and Losing the Soul-life to Follow the Lord***

1. **“If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me...Whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it”** (Matt. 16:24-25, see also vv. 26-27; 10:37-39).

All the things of the kingdom of the heavens are absolutely different from our thoughts, desires, and pursuits. Therefore, if we want to enter the kingdom of the heavens, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, lose our soul-life, and follow the Lord. To deny our self is to not set the mind on our will or our desires. To take up the cross is to set the mind on God’s will and to carry out His purpose. To lose the soul-life is to not care for the desires and feelings of the soul or to live by the soul. We must deny our self, reject our own will, put our soul to death, force our soul to be dealt with by the cross with respect to our desires and enjoyment, and follow the Lord on the narrow way of the cross so that we can enter the kingdom of the heavens and be glorified. The way to enter the kingdom of the heavens and arrive at the throne is through the narrow way of denying the self, taking up the cross, losing the soul-life, and following the Lord. We must pass through this narrow way before we can enter into the kingdom of the heavens and arrive at the throne.

***Being Humbled Willingly***

1. **“Unless you turn and become like little children, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens. He therefore who will humble himself like this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens”** (Matt. 18:3-4).

Humbling oneself and being lowly are also conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens. There are no proud or self-important people in the kingdom of the heavens; everyone in the kingdom willingly humbles himself like a

little child. We must turn and become like little children: being humble, being simple, not being self-conscious, not looking at or thinking of ourselves, forgetting ourselves, not comparing ourselves with others or comparing others with ourselves, not regarding ourselves highly or desiring to be regarded highly, and not considering ourselves to be great or fighting to be great.

***Leaving All to Follow the Lord***

1. **“You who have followed Me, in the restoration...shall sit on...thrones...And everyone who has left... for My name’s sake...shall inherit eternal life”** (Matt. 19:28-29).

These verses show that those who would enter into the kingdom of the heavens to sit on thrones and enjoy the blessing of eternal life therein must leave everything for the Lord’s name’s sake today and follow Him. We must leave all the enjoyment of the world in order to ascend to a throne in the kingdom of the heavens. We must leave behind all worldly riches in order to obtain the glory in the kingdom. If we would enter into the kingdom of the heavens, we must pay a price.

***Enduring Sufferings and Tribulations***

1. **“In Your kingdom... My cup you shall indeed drink”** (Matt. 20:21, 23).

If we want to enter the kingdom of the heavens, we must be willing to drink the cup of His suffering today.

2. **“Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom”** (Acts 14:22).

If we want to enter the kingdom, we must pass through many tribulations. Passing through tribulations is the pathway into the kingdom.

3. **“That you may be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which also you suffer”** (2 Thes. 1:5).

If we want to obtain the kingdom, we must be willing to suffer. We must do so to be worthy of the kingdom.

4. **“Fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus”** (Rev. 1:9).

If we want to partake of the Lord’s kingdom, we must also

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partake of His tribulation. The world today rejects the Lord. Just as the worldly people persecuted the Lord, they also persecute His followers. We must partake of the Lord's tribulation today in order to obtain the kingdom with Him in the future.

### *Being Ready and Watchful*

1. "Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast...Watch therefore" (Matt. 25:10, 13).

Only those who are ready when the Lord comes will be able to enter with Him into the kingdom to attend the wedding feast. In order to be ready, we must be watchful. Thus, being ready and watchful are conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens. To be ready means that in order to meet the Lord, we must gain oil in our vessels by being filled with the Holy Spirit so that we may mature in life. To be watchful means that we are vigilant because we do not know when the Lord will come or when we will meet Him. Those who are not mature will not be worthy to enter into the kingdom to feast with the Lord. If we want to be ready by being mature, we must be watchful.

### *Being Faithful and Prudent*

1. "Faithful and prudent"; "Good and faithful slave...I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 24:45; 25:21, 23; see also Luke 19:17).

If we want to enter the kingdom of the heavens to reign and enter into the Lord's joy in the future, we must be faithful and prudent to work for the Lord in this age. If we want to enter into the Lord's kingdom to rule and reign over the world in the future, we must pass the test of being faithful and prudent in the Lord's house today. Today is the time for preparation through testing, and the time for fulfillment is in the future. If we cannot be faithful and prudent today, we will not be so in the future. If we cannot do well and make the Lord happy today, neither will we in the future. Therefore, those who are not faithful and prudent today will not be qualified to enter the kingdom of the heavens to rule over the world in the future.

### *Not Looking Behind at the World*

1. "No one who puts his hand on the plow and looks behind is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

The things of the world hinder people from pursuing the kingdom of God. Anyone who is unwilling to give up the world and is constantly looking behind to the world is not worthy to enter the kingdom of God. In order to pursue the kingdom of God, we cannot put our hand to the plow and look behind, wanting to obtain the kingdom of the heavens yet be unwilling to give up the world. If we want

to enter the kingdom of the heavens, we must give up the world and not look behind.

### *Endeavoring to Run the Race*

1. "Run in this way, that you may lay hold"; "Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize" (1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:13-14).

The prize spoken of in these verses refers to the reward of entering the kingdom of the heavens. If we want to obtain this reward, we must run as a person runs in a race, forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forward to the things that are before to pursue toward God's goal. While we are on the path of following the Lord and pursuing the kingdom, looking behind is a great hindrance. We must forget the things that are behind to pursue toward the goal. If we want to obtain the reward of the kingdom, we must forget the things which are behind, all the things of the past, whether good or bad, successes or failures; we must forget the things of the past and stretch forward to the things before us on the path.

### *Exercising Self-control in All Things and Buffeting the Body*

1. "Exercises self-control in all things...that they may receive a...crown...I therefore run in this way, not as though without a clear aim; I box in this way, not as though beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave" (1 Cor. 9:25-27).

If we want to obtain the crown and enter the kingdom, we must exercise self-control in all things, rule ourselves, restrict ourselves, and not run without a goal or clear aim. Neither should we be impractical as those who box by beating the air. Rather, we must buffet our body and make it our slave; we should not be loose in any way or indulge in the slightest lust. Those who restrict themselves in this way and buffet their bodies are qualified to enter into the kingdom to reign over others and to deal with the world.

### *Doing a Work of Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones*

1. "Take heed how he builds...Gold, silver, precious stones...He will receive a reward" (1 Cor. 3:10, 12, 14).

How we work today is absolutely related to receiving the reward of entering the kingdom of the heavens in the future. Our work today must be of gold, silver, and precious stones in order for us to receive the reward of entering the kingdom of the heavens. In the Bible gold refers to God's nature or essence (Exo. 25:11, 17-18, 24, 31); silver refers to the Son's redemption (30:16); and precious

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stones refer to the Spirit's transformation for the expression of God's glorious image (Rev. 4:3; 21:11). Therefore, doing a work of gold, silver, and precious stones is to do a work that comes out of God and corresponds to God's nature, that deals with the things of the old creation according to the principle of redemption through the cross, and that manifests God's glory through transformation. This work is entirely out of God and does not involve any human mixture; it is full of the Spirit and has a heavenly element and condition. It is not a work of wood, grass, and stubble, which is out of man, of the flesh, and full of the earthly element and condition. We must be careful to not do a work of wood, grass, and stubble, but to do a work of gold, silver, and precious stones so that we would not suffer loss but receive the reward of entering into the glory of the kingdom of the heavens.

### *Living in Resurrection*

1. **"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God...The dead will be raised incorruptible"; "They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years"** (1 Cor. 15:50, 52; Rev. 20:4; see also v. 6).

These two portions refer to the believers' resurrection and transfiguration. The principle of being delivered from flesh and blood for our transfiguration in resurrection is an indispensable condition for entering the kingdom of the heavens. If we want to inherit the kingdom of God, we must be delivered from our flesh and blood through resurrection and transfiguration in the future; consequently, we must be delivered from our natural life through resurrection today, that is, through the power of Christ's resurrection, which is His resurrection life. Despite the fact that we have not yet obtained the resurrection of our body, that is, a resurrected body, we have the Lord's resurrection life. Although we need to live in our natural body today, we do not need to live in our natural life. We have obtained the Lord's resurrection life, and we can live each day by this resurrection life and be delivered from our natural life. We must live in this resurrection life, not in our natural life, so that we can inherit the kingdom of God in the future. The kingdom of God is spiritual, incorruptible, and in resurrection. If we want to inherit this kingdom, we also must be spiritual and in resurrection. This requires more than obtaining God's resurrection life through regeneration; it requires us to live by this resurrection life, to be freed from the natural life of the old creation, and to reject everything of the old creation and the natural life.

**T**he Bible shows that reigning is related to resurrection. Aaron's rod had authority because it budded in resurrection (Num. 17:8). The Lord obtained all authority in heaven and on earth in His resurrection (Matt. 28:18). Those who are martyred will obtain authority and reign

together with the Lord in resurrection (Rev. 2:10). These verses prove that authority is based on resurrection. Therefore, if we would enter the kingdom of the heavens to rule and reign, we must live in the resurrection life today. Resurrection is a condition for exercising authority.

### *Putting to Death the Lusts of the Flesh*

1. **"The works of the flesh...Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God...They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts"** (Gal. 5:19, 21, 24; see also 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:5).

The kingdom of God is absolutely holy; therefore, evil and filthy people cannot inherit the kingdom of God. If we want to inherit the kingdom of God, that is, to enter the kingdom of the heavens, we must crucify the flesh with its passions and its lusts. We must have holy words and actions, and we must keep ourselves far from sin and filthiness in order to inherit the kingdom of the heavens.

### *Enduring*

1. **"If we endure, we will also reign with Him"** (2 Tim. 2:12).

Endurance is also a condition for entering the kingdom of the heavens. We must endure, and we must pass through the frustration of sufferings to reign with the Lord.

2. **"Fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus"** (Rev. 1:9).

If we want to partake in the Lord's kingdom, we must also partake in the Lord's endurance. We must endure with the Lord to obtain the kingdom with Him.

3. **"He who has endured to the end, this one shall be saved"** (Matt. 10:22).

The salvation spoken of in this verse is not the salvation related to our spirit through regeneration but rather the salvation of entering into the kingdom of the heavens, the salvation of our soul in the future. This salvation can be obtained if we suffer for the Lord today and endure to the end. As we follow the Lord, Satan often uses worldly people to persecute, attack, and torment us. The Lord tells us to meet these things with endurance just as He did when He was on earth. We must endure with Him in order to rule with Him in the future.

### *Fighting the Good Fight, Finishing the Course, and Keeping the Faith*

1. **"I have fought the good fight; I have finished the**

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course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day” (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

These verses show that fighting the good fight, finishing the course, and keeping the faith are conditions for obtaining a crown and entering the kingdom of the heavens. To fight the good fight is to fight for the Lord; to finish the course is to complete the ministry that the Lord commissioned; to keep the faith is to keep the testimony of God. If we do these things today, we will certainly receive a crown as a reward when we enter the kingdom of the heavens.

**T**he crown that the apostle will be given comes from the righteous Lord. This shows that a crown in the kingdom is not related to grace but to righteousness. It is not given freely; it is obtained by paying a price. It is something that the Lord will give as a reward according to righteousness. The apostle spent all his strength to obtain this crown; he spent much time and effort to pay the price. If we want to receive such a crown, we must pay the price; we must fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith.

### *Loving the Lord's Appearing*

1. **“There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord...will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing”** (2 Tim. 4:8).

By loving the Lord's appearing, we can be rewarded with an entrance into the kingdom of the heavens. Loving the Lord's appearing cannot be separated from loving the Lord Himself. If we really love the Lord, we will love His appearing. If we love the Lord's appearing, we will be like John on the island of Patmos, who was for the Lord and said, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20). If we love the Lord's appearing like John, we also will partake of the Lord's kingdom.

### *Believing and Being Diligent to Enter*

1. **“They were not able to enter in because of unbelief”; “Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest”** (Heb. 3:19; 4:11).

The Israelites could not enter into the rest of Canaan, which typifies the rest of the kingdom, because they did not believe. Therefore, the Bible exhorts us to be diligent to enter into the rest of the kingdom lest we be like the Israelites, who had an evil heart of unbelief and rejected the living God, and be unable to enter into the rest of the coming kingdom. We should be like Caleb and Joshua who were diligent to go into the land of Canaan by faith.

We cannot be lacking in the diligence that comes from faith if we want to enter the kingdom.

### *Loving God*

1. **“The kingdom, which He promised to those who love Him”** (James 2:5).

The coming kingdom was promised by God to those who love Him. Thus, loving God is also a condition for entering the kingdom of the heavens. If we want to inherit the kingdom of God in the future, we must be ones who love Him today.

### *Having a Bountiful Life*

1. **“Adding all diligence, supply bountifully in your faith virtue; and in virtue, knowledge; and in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control, endurance; and in endurance, godliness; and in godliness, brotherly love; and in brotherly love, love. For these things, existing in you and abounding...In this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly and bountifully supplied to you”** (2 Pet. 1:5-8, 11).

Prior to speaking of being richly and bountifully supplied, Peter speaks of being a partaker of the divine life and nature. Based on this fact, we should add all diligence to pursue the growth in life, according to the faith that we have received, to abound in virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, and brotherly love until we produce the fullness of love. If these things exist and abound in us, an entrance to the Lord's eternal kingdom will be bountifully supplied to us. Thus, if we want to enter into the kingdom of the Lord, the kingdom of the heavens, we must pursue the growth in life and have an abundant life.

2. **“The kingdom of God is...righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”** (Rom. 14:17).

If we want to participate in the kingdom of God, we must have an abundant life. Paul says that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Righteousness is toward oneself, peace is toward others, and joy in the Holy Spirit is toward God. We must be righteous and strict toward ourselves, we must be peaceful and accommodating toward others, and we must have joy in the Holy Spirit toward God. Whenever we obey the Holy Spirit and live in Him, we have joy before God. Joy is a proof of a proper living before God. If we have righteousness toward ourselves, peace toward others, and joy toward God, we are partaking of God's kingdom. If we live in righteousness, peace, and joy today, we will enter into the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. Thus, a

life of righteousness, peace, and joy, that is, an abundant life, is also a condition for entering the kingdom of the heavens.

### *Overcoming*

The Lord wants to bring in the kingdom through the church. When the church's condition is normal, the church is the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. If the church had not become degraded, she would have been able to usher in the manifestation of the kingdom by being the reality of the kingdom of the heavens in this age. But the church became degraded and fell from her heavenly, spiritual position, so the church as a whole lost its ability to usher in the kingdom, and consequently, not all the believers in the church will be able to participate in the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens. Because of degradation in the church, the Lord has to call out some believers to be overcomers in this time of degradation in order to recover the heavenly, spiritual reality that was lost by the church, to fulfill the church's responsibility to live in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens, and to bring in the kingdom of the heavens. The Lord's call to these overcomers is included in the seven epistles that were sent to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. In these seven epistles the Lord calls believers to overcome and to be the reality of the kingdom of the heavens today so that they can participate in the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens in the future. The conditions for overcoming, as mentioned by the Lord in His call to the seven churches, are conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens. These conditions must be seriously considered by those who want to enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

1. "To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

All the Lord's calls to overcome are related to the condition of the churches in the seven epistles. The first call to the church in Ephesus deals with the cause of the church's degradation—leaving her first love toward the Lord. The church's relationship to the Lord is wholly connected to her love for the Lord. The church's degradation began when she left the Lord as her first love. As soon as

the church left her love toward the Lord, she fell. Although outwardly she was very busy and labored much for the Lord, she lost her testimony before the Lord as a lampstand when she lost her love toward the Lord. This was the reason for the fall of the church in Ephesus in the early days and of the church after the apostolic age, which Ephesus typifies. This condition caused the church to gradually lose the reality of the kingdom and weakened the function of the church with respect to the kingdom of the heavens. Therefore, the Lord calls believers to overcome this condition, to repent, and to recover their first love for Him by maintaining a constant relationship of love toward Him. From this inward love, work can flow out for the Lord, and a testimony of life can shine for the Lord. If the believers overcome in this instance, they will enter into the Paradise of God and have a foretaste of the freshness of the fruit of the tree of life during the kingdom age. Love, light, and life are all interrelated. If we love the Lord, we will shine for Him and enjoy His life.

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OF LIFE CAN SHINE FOR THE LORD.

2. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life... He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death" (Rev. 2:10-11).

When the church loses her love toward the Lord and her testimony of the Lord, she does

not provoke Satan's enmity or attack. But if the church keeps her love for the Lord and is faithful to maintain the Lord's testimony, Satan will come in to harm and persecute her. This was the experience of the church in Smyrna, which typifies the church in the first and second centuries suffering under the opposition of the Roman Empire. Satan's goal in his cruel mistreatment of the church is to frighten, hinder, and decimate her in order to destroy the testimony of the Lord and to prevent the church from hastening the coming of the kingdom of the heavens. The second call from the Lord to overcome is for the believers to not be afraid of Satan's persecution, to suffer for the Lord, and to be faithful unto death. Overcoming in this instance will cause the believers to obtain a crown of life in the future; this means, they will enter into the kingdom of the heavens to enjoy the glory of life, and they will not be hurt of the second death. We can be faithful unto death and overcome Satan's persecutions because we can live by Christ's resurrection life. If we overcome Satan's persecution, even unto death, by Christ's life today, we will enjoy the glory of life and not be harmed by death in the future.



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3. **“To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written”** (Rev. 2:17).

Satan has many stratagems to destroy the church. If a plot to persecute the church does not succeed, he will change his plot to welcome the church with a smile. This is what happened with the church in Pergamos, which typifies the church in the early fourth century. In the fourth century the church began to be mixed with the world through Satan’s stratagems. In the beginning the church was separated and completely distinct from the world, but Satan caused the church to go back to the world, to be mixed with the world, and to accept the teaching of Balaam, who received wages for being a prophet and who caused the people of God to commit fornication with the world and be contaminated with idol sacrifices. The church also received the teaching of the Nicolaitans, who subdued the laity and formed a clerical hierarchy. The teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans caused the church to commit spiritual fornication with the world and to be contaminated with idols. As a result, the church lost her heavenly position and reality entirely, so she could not function in the matter of ushering in the kingdom of the heavens. Thus, the Lord’s third call is for believers to overcome the mixture of the church with the world and to overcome its human teachings and worldly organization. By overcoming, believers can enter the kingdom of the heavens and enjoy the hidden manna and the blessing of having a white stone with a new name. Giving up the prominent position of the fallen, worldly church and the vainglory of the worldly organization of Christianity today is a condition for obtaining the kingdom blessings in the future—the hidden manna, which is the hidden Christ who is not enjoyed by everyone, and a new name, which speaks of a special relationship with the Lord that is for His particular delight.

4. **“He who overcomes and he who keeps My works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he will shepherd them with an iron rod...as I also have received from My Father”** (Rev. 2:26-27).

In order to destroy the church’s function with respect to the kingdom of the heavens, Satan caused her not only to be outwardly mixed with the world and to lose her spiritual position but also to be filled with every kind of heresy and corruption until she was completely transmuted into an instrument for the expression of Satan and his desires. In the church in Thyatira, which typifies the Roman Catholic Church, Satan corrupted the church so that the church lost her spiritual position, nature, and condition (cf. Rev. 21) and became Satan’s mystery, Babylon the Great (17:5)—a great, earthly, religious organization filled with Satan and his evil words and deeds. Therefore, in his fourth call the Lord asks the

believers to overcome these things by not following the Roman Catholic Church into heresy, not partaking of her spiritual fornication, and not being contaminated with her idolatry but instead by keeping His commandments unto the end when He returns. If the believers overcome in this instance, they will obtain the kingdom’s authority and rule over the nations with the Lord. Those who do not follow Satan’s religious teachings will obtain Christ’s authority in the kingdom. Those who keep the Lord’s commandments in the church will carry out the Lord’s commandments in the kingdom.

5. **“He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels”** (Rev. 3:5).

God wants to bring in His kingdom through the church; this goal is eternal and will not change. Although Satan corrupted the church, God came in to revive the church. Even though the church was revived and escaped some of the satanic corruption, she remained weak and frail before the Lord; she did not completely escape the power of death, and she lacked the strength of life. This was the condition of the church in Sardis, which typifies the condition of the Protestant churches. In such a dead and weak condition, the church cannot bring in the kingdom for the Lord, and she is even defiled in the Lord’s eyes. Thus, the Lord’s fifth call is for believers to overcome the dead, cold, weak condition in the church by relying on the Lord’s powerful resurrection life and by being strong and living to keep themselves and all their actions from being contaminated by the defilement of death. If we overcome in this instance, we will be worthy to enter the kingdom of the heavens and to walk with the Lord in white garments, and our name will not be erased out of the book of life; rather, the Lord will confess our name before His Father and His Father’s angels. If we want to walk with the Lord in white garments in the future, we must not be contaminated by death today. If our living and actions bear the testimony of being in the Lord’s life without being defiled by death, our name will not be erased from the book of life during the millennium. If we want to enter into the kingdom of eternal life and enjoy the blessing of life, we must be in the power of life and live a life that overcomes death.

6. **“I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown. He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God,...and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem...and My new name”** (Rev. 3:11-12).

If the church is in a proper condition, all the saints would love one another and be members one of another; they

would do their best to keep the word of the Lord's endurance, obeying the Lord's word in all things; and they would not forsake His name in anything or have any name other than the Lord's. When the church is like this, she is an anti-testimony to this rebellious earth, which rejects the Lord. This was the condition of the church in Philadelphia, the church of brotherly love, which typifies the state of the church in the early nineteenth century, particularly among the Brethren. This condition is the standard that the church should maintain, but this is not easy. Thus, the Lord's sixth call is for believers to hold fast what they have until He returns. To overcome in this instance requires us to exhaust our little power so that we can obtain a crown and enter into the kingdom of the heavens. There we will be pillars in the temple of our God and have God's name, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the Lord's new name written on us. If we keep the word of the Lord's endurance today, we will be pillars in the temple of God in the future. If we do not reject the Lord's name, then God's name, the name of God's city, and the Lord's new name will be written on us. If we keep all these things, we will obtain a crown and enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

**7. "He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne" (Rev. 3:21).**

When the church is up to the Lord's standard, she can quickly become self-satisfied, proud, and lukewarm. She can also be lacking in faith, approved works, and fresh vision. The church in Laodicea, which typifies the fallen churches of the Brethren, is in this condition. When the church is in such a condition, she shuts the Lord outside, and the Lord is no longer able to use her to bring in the kingdom. Therefore, the Lord's seventh call is for believers to repent and to overcome all self-satisfaction and pride by paying the price to pursue the faith that passes the test of being rich before the Lord, by pursuing actions that are approved by the Lord in order to be clothed before Him, and by pursuing light to see one's poverty, pitiful situation, blindness, and nakedness. An overcomer must also open his heart and allow the Lord to have the ground to sit down and dine with him. Overcoming in this way enables one to enter into the kingdom of the heavens in the future and to sit with the Lord on His throne of authority to reign with Him. If we want to enter the kingdom of the heavens and sit on the throne with the Lord in

the future, we must open our hearts to Him and allow Him to come in and dine with us today. If we are willing to fellowship with the Lord today in spirit, we can sit with the Lord on the throne of authority in the kingdom of the heavens. We must be willing to allow the Lord to sit on the throne in our hearts today in order for us to sit with Him on His throne in the kingdom of the heavens. Having the Lord's presence and allowing the Lord to sit on the throne of our heart today is a condition for being with the Lord and sitting with Him on the throne in the kingdom.

**T**he content of the Lord's call related to overcoming shows that overcoming is a matter of fighting against and being victorious over all things that oppose His testimony and damage His kingdom. The Lord's testimony depends on the church, and the Lord wants to bring in His kingdom through the church. Knowing this, Satan does everything in his power to damage the church. Therefore,

the Lord needs some overcomers who will fight and win the victory. Overcoming is necessary to bring in the Lord's kingdom; it is an essential condition for entering the kingdom of the heavens. These conditions are quite high. We must recover our first love toward the Lord; we must endure persecution and trials, even being faithful unto death; we must not be

mixed with the world, and we must refuse the clergy-laity system to escape from the organization of Christianity; we must forsake the heresies of Roman Catholicism and not be contaminated by idol worship or spiritual fornication; we must overcome the coldness and weakness of spiritual death; we must keep the word of the Lord's endurance and not forsake His name; we must not be self-satisfied but pursue with an empty heart, allowing the Lord a place within us for fellowship. Overcoming in these matters are conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens. Only overcomers will enter the kingdom of the heavens and sit on the throne. Defeated believers who remain in the dark, evil world will not enter into the bright, righteous kingdom to reign. If we are not an overcomer in the midst of today's degradation, we will not reign in the age of restoration. The Lord commands us to fight and win the victory. May we be faithful.

### *Being Martyred*

**1. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those**

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who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and of those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:4).

Those who are martyred for the testimony of Jesus, for the word of God, and for not worshipping the beast or his image (Antichrist and his image) or receiving his mark will reign with Christ. Thus, being killed, or martyred, for the Lord fulfills a condition for entering the kingdom of the heavens. Not everyone who enters the kingdom of the heavens must be martyred, but those who give their all and are martyred for the Lord God will enter the kingdom of the heavens and reign with Christ.

The twenty-seven items above are conditions related to entering the kingdom of the heavens. These items are not as simple as being saved. Being saved is a once-for-all matter, but these items cover a lifetime. These items should cause us to be in fear and trembling for our entire life. We need to repent continually and bear fruit worthy of repentance. We need to be poor in spirit and pursue the Lord with our whole heart. We need to be willing to be persecuted for the sake of righteousness. We need to have a surpassing righteousness and do the will of God. We need to live in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens, be restricted by the heavens, and submit to the heavenly authority. We need to struggle and strive to take the kingdom by violence. We need to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and lose our soul-life to follow the Lord. We need to be willing to be humble and leave everything to follow the Lord. We need to endure sufferings, be ready and watchful, and be faithful and prudent in our testimony for the Lord. We need to work and serve the Lord, not looking back at the world but forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forward to the things that are before in order to pursue toward the goal. We need to exercise self-control in all things and buffet our bodies. We need to do a work of gold, silver, and precious stones. We need to live in resurrection and daily put to death the lusts of the flesh. We need to endure and be long-suffering. We need to fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith. We need to love the Lord’s appearing. We need to constantly pursue by faith. We need to love the Lord with singleness. We need to have an abundance of life. We need to be overcomers because of the degradation of the church and, if necessary, be martyred for the Lord. All these items are conditions for entering into the kingdom of the heavens. Although they speak of many matters, they have one point in common: if we want to enter the kingdom of the heavens, we must bear considerable responsibility, have a considerable living, and do a considerable work. If we live in these things today, we will obtain the reward from the Lord and enter the

kingdom of the heavens to sit with Him on the throne in the future. We should never think that everyone who is saved will enter into the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens.

Brothers and sisters, we all have been saved. We are all like the prodigal son in Luke 15 who returned home. We all have received grace from our Father. We have the robe of justification, the sealing ring (the Holy Spirit), sandals that separate us from the earth, and the fattened calf (Christ) as our enjoyment of life. These items are sufficient for us to be children in the house of God, but if we want to be kings in the kingdom of God, we must have crowns. God has not yet given us crowns; we must endeavor to obtain them. God also will not give us crowns freely; instead, we must meet certain conditions for them. When we are saved, we are saved forever. We do not need to do anything more or meet any other conditions. But whether we will obtain a crown in the future and enter into the reward of the kingdom of the heavens is not certain. This matter will be determined only by whether we are faithful and diligent in the Lord’s business. This reward requires us to pay a price and meet certain conditions. May we faithfully labor.

After seeing the conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens, we may feel that they are too high and too hard. However, we should not be discouraged, because God not only has conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens but also promises concerning this matter. Moreover, the power of God is upon us for the accomplishment of His promises. Thus, we must see God’s promises and God’s power with respect to the kingdom of the heavens.

### **Promises concerning Entering the Kingdom of the Heavens**

God’s conditions concerning entering the kingdom of the heavens are according to His holiness and glory. God’s promises concerning entering the kingdom of the heavens are according to His love and grace. God is obliged to place conditions on us because of His holiness and glory. God is willing to give us promises because of His love and grace. His conditions speak of the responsibilities we must bear and the things we must do. His promises speak of the responsibilities He will bear and the things He will do.

1. **“Do not be afraid, little flock, because your Father has been well pleased to give you the kingdom”** (Luke 12:32).

This word is so sweet! It is full of comfort and encouragement. This is truly a precious promise. Although the Bible tells us that it is difficult to enter the kingdom of

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the heavens, we need not be afraid because our Father is well pleased to give us the kingdom. Although it is difficult to enter the kingdom and we must labor to seize it, we should not be afraid, because our Father is well pleased to give us the kingdom. We must pay a price, pass through many hardships, and endure many sufferings to enter the kingdom of the heavens, but the Lord tells us not to be afraid because our Father is well pleased to give us the kingdom. Since the Lord has promised that God is well pleased to give us the kingdom, God must work on our behalf so that He can give us the kingdom. He must work in order to make us qualified to obtain that kingdom. Although God is well pleased to give us the kingdom, we also must be well pleased to obtain the kingdom. Although God is well pleased, whether or not we are well pleased to obtain it is a question that remains to be answered. If we are not well pleased to obtain the kingdom, it does not matter that God is well pleased to give us the kingdom, because He has no way to give it to us. But if we are well pleased, God has the way and the opportunity to come in and work so that He can give us the kingdom, or in other words, so that we can receive it. We should believe the Lord's promises in His Word and give ourselves to God to allow Him to work in us and make us qualified to receive the kingdom that He desires to give to us. If we are willing to stand upon the Lord's promises and offer ourselves to God by faith, He will certainly come in to do a work of grace in us and will continue to work in us to the extent that He has the position to give us the kingdom according to His pleasure.

## 2. "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matt. 6:33).

This verse is a great, rich promise. If we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, He will not only give us His kingdom and His righteousness but also clothing, food, and other necessities of life. This is a precious promise. If we seek first the kingdom of God, He will give us not only the kingdom but also all the things that are necessary for our living. If the Lord opens our eyes to see this precious promise, we will see that entering the kingdom of the heavens is no longer as difficult as we thought.

**M**any brothers and sisters feel they should love the Lord, give their all to follow Him, and pursue the kingdom of the heavens. However, they think that if they love the Lord, give their all, follow Him, and pursue the kingdom, they will have no way to make a living. Therefore, they live in the world for the sake of their livelihood and cannot follow the Lord in a good way. They also think that they will be forgiven because they had no other choice but to take care of their livelihood; however, this concept is wrong. Since the Lord promised that He would bear the responsibility for our livelihood, we should not allow these things to entangle us and prevent us from

following the Lord in the way that enables us to pursue the kingdom of God. Since the Lord promises that all these things would be added if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, it is best to pursue the kingdom of God. If we are willing to pursue the kingdom of God today, God will not only give us His kingdom but also add all the things we need for our living today. Therefore, it is easy to pursue the kingdom of God based on this promise.

## 3. "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you...How much more will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matt. 7:7, 11).

These words are also a great and precious promise given to us by the Lord. If we ask, it will be given to us; if we seek, we will find; and if we knock, the door will be opened to us. This promise can be applied to all things, but according to the Lord's word in Matthew 5—7, which especially emphasizes the kingdom, this promise particularly applies to seeking the kingdom. Luke 11:13, which refers to the same promise, says, "How much more will the Father who is from heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" In contrast, Matthew 7:11 says, "How much more will your Father who is in the heavens give *good things* to those who ask Him!" Although we dare not say that these good things refer only to the kingdom, in God's eyes the kingdom is a good thing according to the central teaching of Matthew. Thus, according to the Lord's promise, if we are willing to ask, seek, and knock, God will surely give us the kingdom, which He regards as a good thing. God is willing to give us the kingdom; therefore, if we are willing to receive it from Him, we should ask Him for it. If we are willing to ask God for it, He will give it to us.

**T**hus, the Lord's promises in these three places show that God is happy to give us the kingdom. If we are willing to seek and ask, we will surely receive. If we would receive the kingdom of God, we should seek it by our living. We should not only seek the kingdom by our living but also ask God for it specifically. We should not only have a life that seeks the kingdom but also have prayers that ask for the kingdom. If we stand on the Lord's precious promises and seek the kingdom of God by faith and ask for it, God will come in and work according to the Lord's promises to cause us to obtain the kingdom that He is willing to give to us.

## The Power for Entering the Kingdom of the Heavens

God's promises concerning His kingdom are fulfilled by His power. God is willing to promise us the kingdom because He has the power to accomplish this matter. His power can meet all the requirements that His holiness and glory place on us for entering the kingdom of the heavens. The requirements of His holiness and glory are



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high, but His power to us is also great. All the requirements for entering the kingdom of the heavens, which are placed upon us by His holiness and glory, can be accomplished for us by His power.

**1. “Only with difficulty will a rich man enter into the kingdom of the heavens...Who then can be saved?... With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:23, 25-26).**

In these verses the Lord said not only that entering the kingdom of the heavens is “with difficulty” but also that with men it is “impossible.” Thus, we must see that entering the kingdom of the heavens is impossible with men. From our point of view, entering the kingdom of the heavens is only a difficult matter, but the Lord said that it is impossible. It is not only difficult; it is impossible. If a man attempts to enter the kingdom of the heavens by his own power, he will not accomplish anything. Just as we cannot be saved by our own power, we cannot enter the kingdom of the heavens by our own power.

Many of us hear the word of the kingdom of the heavens and make a strong decision to endeavor and pursue in order to enter the kingdom of the heavens. But the first thing the Lord does for us is to show us that we cannot enter into the kingdom of the heavens by our own power. The Lord allows us to fail again and again until we become discouraged. The Lord must do this to enable us to see that entering the kingdom of the heavens is absolutely impossible for us with our own power; only then will the Lord have the ground to work in us further in order to bring us into the kingdom of the heavens.

**E**ven though the Lord said that entering the kingdom of the heavens is impossible with men, He does not stop there. If this were the case, entering the kingdom of the heavens would be a hopeless matter for us. But thank the Lord, He continued, saying, “But with God all things are possible.” He said that this is impossible with men in order to show us that it is possible with God. We must see that “with men this is impossible” before we can see that “with God all things are possible.” Thus, the Lord must allow us to fail and bring us to our end so that we will see that this is impossible in ourselves and also that it is possible with God. Before we can look to God and rely on His power, we must see that entering the kingdom is impossible with us. Our end is God’s beginning. What is possible with God is manifested in what is impossible with us.

If we look only at our own inability and do not look at God’s ability, we will be disappointed and afraid. Numbers 13 and 14 show that the Israelites were afraid and could not enter the good land of Canaan, because they looked only at their own inability, not God’s ability.

Although Caleb and Joshua looked at their own inability, they also looked at God’s ability and believed that He was able. Thus, they were strengthened and emboldened to believe that they were well able to overcome the obstacles in the land, and they went up and obtained the land of Canaan. We should not be disappointed when we see that we are not able, because that is the time for us to look to God and believe that He is able.

**J**ust as salvation is a matter of God’s power, entering the kingdom of the heavens also is a matter of God’s power. Just as salvation is accomplished for us by God, entering the kingdom of the heavens is also accomplished for us by Him. The only difference is that our eternal salvation has already been accomplished for us by God, but our entrance into the kingdom of the heavens is in the process of being accomplished by God for us.

According to Luke 12:32, we know that God desires to give us the kingdom. Now, according to Matthew 19:26, we know that God is able. This truly is the gospel. God is willing to give us the kingdom of the heavens, and He is able to give us the kingdom. Although we are not able to enter into the kingdom of the heavens, God can enable us to obtain it.

**2. “Christ...is powerful in you” (2 Cor. 13:3).**

The power of God comes into us through Christ. Christ is the power of God. He is in us as the power of God. Thus, He is powerful in us. It is true that we are weak in ourselves, but Christ, who lives in us, is powerful. He died on the cross for us and resolved the problem of our sins; today He is living in us to resolve the problem of our weakness. On the cross He was our Substitute for us to be saved; today He is in us as our power for us to enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

God gives us power by having Christ abide in us as our power. The power that God gives us today is the Christ who indwells us. God gave Christ to us as power. Today we do not need to beseech God for power. God’s power has already been given to us in Christ. God wants to manifest His power in us through Christ’s dwelling in us. It is the indwelling Christ as our power who brings us into the kingdom of the heavens. From within, He wants to bear our weaknesses, meet God’s demands for us, endure the sufferings of this world, overcome Satan’s frustrations, and do everything so that we may enter into the kingdom of the heavens. As long as we experience Galatians 2:20, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me,” He will live out the living that is required for us to enter the kingdom of the heavens.

Christ abides in us as the Spirit to be our power (Rom. 8:9-10). This Spirit is the Spirit of life (v. 2), who imparts

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the power of life into us so that we may do the things that are pleasing to God (Ezek. 36:27). When we set our mind on Him and follow Him, He can supply us inwardly with the righteousness required for our entrance into the kingdom of the heavens (Rom. 8:4-5).

**3. “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).**

The power of Christ is manifested in our weaknesses and perfected in them. We should not be saddened or discouraged by our weaknesses. Our weaknesses are the means through which Christ expresses His power. We should be like Paul and boast in our weaknesses so that the power of Christ might tabernacle over us. The weaker we are and the more we boast in our weaknesses, the more the power of Christ will tabernacle over us and be manifested and perfected in our weakness. The power of Christ cannot be manifested in our strength; it can be manifested only in our weakness. Our strength is a problem for Christ. It is only our weakness that enables Christ to manifest Himself and His power in us.

**T**he power of Christ that is perfected in our weakness is our all-sufficient grace. This powerful grace is sufficient to meet all the needs we encounter in pursuing the kingdom of the heavens. This powerful grace is the resurrection life of Christ, His resurrection power, which is just the resurrected Christ living in us and who alone is sufficient to accomplish all the conditions for our entrance into the kingdom of the heavens.

**4. “I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me” (Phil. 4:13).**

Although we are weak and powerless and cannot enter into the kingdom of the heavens on our own, Paul says that we can do all things in Christ who empowers us. The word *empowers* in the original Greek does not have the sense of the Lord giving power to us from outside of us; rather, it is the Lord making us strong from within us. This is not Christ objectively giving us power but Christ subjectively making us strong. He is not like a crutch that upholds us outwardly; rather, He is like food that strengthens us from within. The apostle relied on such a One—the strong Christ—within him as his power to enable him to do all things.

One Bible version translates the phrase *in Him* as “by Him.” This suggests that Christ is beside us and that we should lean on Him for strength, but this is not the meaning, because we are already in Him. We do not need to stay close to Him and use our strength to lean on Him; rather, we are already joined to Him, and He is the strength that we need. First Corinthians 1:30 tells us that God put us into Christ, but we still need the Lord to open our eyes to see this glorious fact. When we receive revelation from God to see that we are in Christ, we see that we are strong in Christ. Because we are in Christ, His strength is our strength. If, under God’s light, we truly see that God has joined us to Christ, we will be able to say with the apostle that we can do all things in Him who empowers us. We will also see that the conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens are not difficult. It is easy to live out the conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens because we are empowered in Christ.

We are able to do all things because we live in Christ and take Him as our power. Apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5), but in Him we can do all things.

**5. “In all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37).**

One Bible version translates the phrase *through Him* as “by Him.” Again

this suggests that we conquer by leaning on the Lord, but since we are in Him, everything in our experience of conquering must come through Him. It is useless for us to lean on Him with our strength; instead, our conquering comes through His conquering in us. When our experiences are through Him, we will conquer in all things, and we not merely conquer but more than conquer. In ourselves we have no way to meet the conditions for entering into the kingdom of the heavens, and we have no way to attain to God’s high standard, but through Him we more than conquer in all things.

**A**ll the requirements contained in the law in the Old Testament were given to prove that man is not able; all the requirements in the New Testament reveal that God is able. All the requirements in the law in the Old Testament were given for man to fulfill; all the requirements in the New Testament cannot be fulfilled by man but by God in man and for man. Hence, all the requirements, the conditions, for entering the kingdom of the heavens truly speak of God’s ability and of what we can do in Him. We need God to open our eyes to see that He

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IN WHAT IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH US.

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has placed requirements upon us so that He can fulfill them in us through His strength. Although God makes requirements of us, He wants to fulfill these requirements in us by Himself. On the one hand, He is outside of us making requirements of us, but on the other hand, He is in us fulfilling these requirements for us. Outside of us there are many commandments, but inside of us He is keeping these commandments for us. Thus, He is the One requiring, and He is the One fulfilling; He is the One commanding, and He is the One keeping the commandments. This is the New Testament; this is salvation. This is the highest definition of grace. Grace means that God has not only satisfied His righteous requirements for us on the cross but also that He is also within us satisfying the high, great requirements of the holy commandments in the New Testament. If He were not in us in this way, no one would be able to fulfill the requirements of the New Testament or keep His commandments in the New Testament. Who can turn his left cheek after being slapped on the right? Who can love his enemies and pray for those who persecute him? Who can be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect? Who can be holy as God is holy? Who can always rejoice and give thanks in everything? Who can daily deny himself, take up the cross, lose his soul-life, and leave everything to follow the Lord? No one can do these things through his own strength. But, praise the Lord, through Him we can do all these things and more than conquer because He is in us fulfilling all that He requires of us on our behalf. As long as we are willing to give ourselves to Him and to go through Him, He will fulfill His requirements from within, living out what He requires and spontaneously producing a living that qualifies us and makes us worthy to enter the kingdom of the heavens.

#### 6. "So great a salvation" (Heb. 2:3).

The "so great a salvation" spoken of in this verse is the Lord's full salvation. In the book of Hebrews the Holy Spirit shows the Lord's full salvation. He shows that the Lord not only died for us to redeem us from our sins but also resurrected and ascended to the highest heaven where He dwells today and from where, by the power of His indestructible life, He supports us and leads us in the way of faith to pursue a holy living and to run the race with endurance until He brings us into the coming rest of the coming kingdom. Thus, all who trust in Him can be saved to the uttermost. The Holy Spirit shows that Christ is a Savior who is always living, and that the salvation He gives is so great that human words cannot express it. Therefore, in this passage Paul speaks of this inexpressibly great salvation as "so great a salvation." How great is it? We cannot say; we can only say, "So great."

This "so great a salvation" includes not only being saved

but also overcoming and entering the kingdom of the heavens. In the Old Testament the Lord's salvation for the Israelites included not only saving them out of Egypt but also bringing them through the wilderness into Canaan. Thus, in the Old Testament if an Israelite came out of Egypt but did not enter Canaan, he received part of God's great salvation but did not experience God's full salvation. Similarly, God's salvation today not only redeems us but also takes us through the way of the cross and brings us into the kingdom. If we are merely saved from our sins but do not walk on the way of the cross and enter the kingdom, we will enjoy only a portion of the salvation that is available to us.

**T**he way of the cross brings us into the coming kingdom. We must not think that we can take the way of the cross by our own power in order to enter the kingdom. No! Rather, we are constantly saved by the Lord in His salvation to take the way of the cross and to enter the kingdom of the heavens. The Lord in His great salvation constantly brings us along in the way of the cross until He brings us into the kingdom of the heavens. Therefore, we must not neglect His great salvation but instead daily enter the Holy of Holies through Him to come to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace for timely help so that we can run the race set before us and enter the coming rest (Heb. 4:16; 12:1), which is the coming kingdom.

We cannot enter the kingdom of the heavens through our own effort. God does not want us to pursue the kingdom of the heavens by our own strength. With us this is impossible. It is God who makes it possible for us to enter the kingdom of the heavens. He puts Christ in us to be our power. Then Christ's power is perfected in our weakness to be our sufficient grace. In Christ we are strengthened to do the things that are pleasing to God. When we go through Him, we are able to more than conquer and fulfill the conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens. When we daily live in His great salvation, we allow the power of His indestructible life to save us, support us, and bring us through the narrow way of the cross until we are qualified to enter into the coming glorious kingdom. There are, however, two things we must emphasize.

First, we must emphasize consecration. We must consecrate ourselves to the Lord in order for Him to manifest His power in us. The Lord is well pleased to give us the kingdom and to manifest His power in us by bringing us into the kingdom, but if we are not willing to give ourselves to Him through consecration, He cannot do anything. Consecrating ourselves to the Lord does not mean that we decide to do something for Him; rather, it means that we allow the Lord to manifest His power in us and work in us. We do not consecrate ourselves in order to

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do something for the Lord; we consecrate ourselves because we cannot do anything, so we give ourselves to the Lord to allow Him to do what is needed in us and for us.

**S**econd, we must emphasize faith. We must not only consecrate ourselves to the Lord, give ourselves to Him, and allow Him to do things in us and for us, but we must also have faith that the Lord will do these things according to His promises. His accomplishments for us are not based on our feelings but on the Lord's Word. It is not something that is possible only when we feel the Lord's power but rather when we have no sense of His power at all. It is not something that occurs only on peaceful, tranquil days full of sunshine but rather on days of trial and difficulty, days filled with dark clouds. When we believe that the Lord will manifest His power in our weakness according to His Word, we are able to more than conquer in these things. If this is our experience, the Lord in His faithfulness will manifest His power in us, do everything for us, and cause us to enjoy His full salvation to bring us into His glorious kingdom.

### **The Blessings of Entering the Kingdom of the Heavens**

The New Testament also speaks about the blessings that the believers will receive when they enter the kingdom of the heavens in the future. Therefore, we need to examine the main points of some of these great blessings. However, we must clearly see that these blessings are related to the kingdom of the heavens, not to the household of God. Today in the church we are the household of God. The blessings we enjoy in the church today are the blessings of a household. But a household is not God's final goal; He wants to obtain the kingdom. God wants His household to become His kingdom. Our entrance into the kingdom of the heavens in the future is by means of the household, but our enjoyment in the kingdom will be related to the blessings of His glorious kingdom, which will far surpass our enjoyment of the blessings related to His household.

### **Reigning**

1. **"Reigned with Christ for a thousand years"** (Rev. 20:4, see also v. 6; 2 Tim. 2:12).

When believers enter the kingdom of the heavens in the future, they will not be ordinary citizens; rather, they will

reign with Christ. The kingship in the kingdom of the heavens is not an individual but a corporate matter. Christ and all the overcoming believers will be a corporate king with Christ as the Head to rule the coming earth. This will last for one thousand years. This is the first blessing that believers will receive when they enter the kingdom of the heavens.

### **Obtaining a Crown**

1. **"There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness"** (2 Tim. 4:8).

A crown is the symbol of a king, so obtaining a crown is related to the first blessing of reigning as a king with Christ. The believers in the kingdom will obtain a particular kind of crown, the crown of righteousness. This is because the crown will be given by the Lord, "the righteous Judge," to those who fought for Him, ran the race for Him, kept His word, and loved His appearing. Through this crown, He will show that He approves of what they have done, that everything they have done is pleasing and acceptable to Him. This crown will declare His righteousness and also show that the kingdom believers are justified,

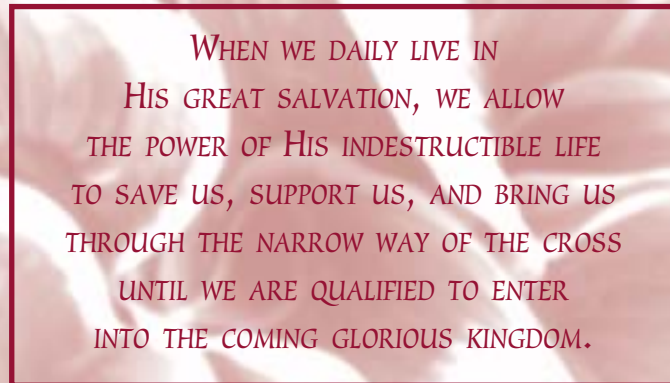
approved, and pleasing to Him.

2. **"You will receive the unfading crown of glory"** (1 Pet. 5:4; see also Phil. 4:1; 1 Thes. 2:19-20).

The crown received by the believers in the kingdom of the heavens is called a "crown of glory" because this crown expresses the Lord's glory and symbolizes that those who are in the kingdom are able to enjoy the Lord's glory together with Him. The Lord will give this crown to those who faithfully shepherd His flock today. All those who willingly labor to care for God's children have a crown composed of the ones they have cared for, who have become their glory and crown. This crown of glory is an "unfading crown of glory" because it signifies the expression of the Lord's eternally unfading glory.

3. **"I will give you the crown of life"** (Rev. 2:10; see also James 1:12).

Another crown received by the believers is the crown of life. The Lord will give this crown to those who love Him,



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who suffer persecution on His behalf by relying on His resurrection life, and who are faithful unto death. This crown of life is a symbol that they have overcome the authority of death, that they will never again suffer harm from death, and that they have fully escaped the realm of death.

**4. “They...receive a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible” (1 Cor. 9:25).**

The crown that the believers receive, whether it is one of righteousness, glory, or life, will surely be an incorruptible one, since all these crowns are heavenly and eternal. They have the divine, incorruptible nature. Thus, the crown obtained by the overcoming believers when they enter the kingdom of the heavens will speak forth and testify that all their living today was according to God’s righteousness, for His glory, and by His life. Therefore, the crown will be incorruptible and eternal. The crown will testify that they followed the Lord in this age and are in the glory of the kingdom.

***Sitting on the Throne***

**1. “Sit with Me on My throne” (Rev. 3:21).**

The throne, like a crown, is for reigning. The highest peak of God’s salvation is to save us to reign from the throne in His kingdom and to give us to sit on the throne with His glorious Son. On this throne we will not only reign and exercise authority with Christ but also fellowship with Him, and through our reigning together with Him, we will enjoy Him.

**2. “When the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you also shall sit on...thrones, judging” (Matt. 19:28).**

When the believers enter into the kingdom, they will not only rule the earth but also judge the inhabitants of the millennial age (1 Cor. 6:2). The throne is a throne not only for ruling but also for judging.

***Exercising Authority***

**1. “To him I will give authority over the nations...as I also have received from My Father” (Rev. 2:26-27; see also Luke 19:17, 19; Matt. 25:21, 23).**

When the overcomers enter the kingdom of the heavens to reign, their main function will be to exercise authority and rule over the nations. They will rule over everything in the coming kingdom. They will rule with the Lord and exercise His authority to rule; this will be a great blessing.

***Being Priests***

**1. “A royal priesthood”; “Priests to our God; and they**

**will reign on the earth” (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 5:10; see also 1:6).**

In the kingdom of the heavens the believers will not only be kings but also priests. As kings, they will exercise authority for God, represent Him, and bring His authority to men; as priests, they will serve God, represent man, and bring man’s needs to God. As kings, they will participate in God’s authority and administrate His government; as priests, they will participate in God’s life and obtain God Himself.

In the Old Testament the priests and kings were two different groups of people (2 Chron. 26:18); kings could not be priests, and priests could not be kings. But the believers in the kingdom will be both priests and kings, like the Lord whom they follow (Zech. 6:12-13). They will be a “royal priesthood” with the authority of a king and the blessings of a priest. This is the highest blessing in the Lord’s salvation. The Lord’s salvation saves us to this extent.

***Inheriting the Earth***

**1. “They shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5).**

In the kingdom of the heavens the believers will inherit the earth. The entire globe will be given to the believers during the kingdom age. Today those who are willing to give up the world for the Lord will inherit the earth with the Lord and obtain the earth as their inheritance (Psa. 2:8).

***Entering into His Joy***

**1. “Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:21, 23).**

Joy is also one of the blessings enjoyed by the believers in the coming kingdom of the heavens. Reigning with the Lord, sitting on the throne with Him, exercising authority with Him, and being glorified with Him are all matters that will bring an indescribable joy. This must be a tremendous blessing; otherwise, the Lord would not have mentioned it with such particular emphasis.

***Entering Rest***

**1. “Entering into His rest” (Heb. 4:1, see also v. 11).**

Joy is one of the blessings of the kingdom of the heavens; rest is another. Joy involves happiness, and rest involves satisfaction. When the believers enter the coming kingdom of the heavens, they will not feel sad or dissatisfied. Everything will be pleasant and satisfying. Outwardly, they will not labor; inwardly, they will not sigh. Their body, soul, and spirit will feel exceedingly comfortable. This is truly a blessing that will feel so sweet.

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## *Being Glorified with the Lord*

### 1. “Glorified with Him” (Rom. 8:17; see also 1 Pet. 5:1).

Another great blessing that the believers will obtain when they enter the kingdom of the heavens is being glorified with the Lord Jesus. They will enter with Him into God’s glory to enjoy and express God.

### 2. “More surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17).

In the coming kingdom the believers will be glorified with Christ with a glory of eternal weight, a glory that surpasses everything and lasts for eternity. Therefore, the apostle Paul says that the afflictions we endure for the Lord today are not worthy of being regarded with the glory we will receive.

## *Enjoying a Foretaste of the Blessings of the New Jerusalem*

### 1. “To him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God”; “I will write upon him...the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God” (Rev. 2:7; 3:12).

The Paradise of God spoken of here is the New Jerusalem, since the tree of life is in the New Jerusalem. The coming New Jerusalem is the Paradise of God, and it is for the enjoyment of God and His saved ones. These passages show that a foretaste of the New Jerusalem will be a reward to the overcomers in the millennial kingdom because the overcomers will be able to enjoy it first. If we read Revelation carefully, we can see that during the millennial kingdom, the New Jerusalem will be the bride of the Lamb in which only the believers who overcome in this age can participate (19:7); during the new heavens and the new earth, she will be the wife of the Lamb in which all the believers can participate (21:9). The bride is temporary and exclusive; the wife is permanent and inclusive.

**T**he Lord gives the overcoming believers the reward of a fresh foretaste of the New Jerusalem as the bride of the Lamb in the millennial kingdom. The duration of the millennial kingdom is the Lord’s wedding day (19:7), and the kingdom itself is the wedding feast of Christ. At that time the overcoming believers will be both the bride of Christ and the guests who are invited to the wedding feast. During this thousand-year wedding feast, the Lord will give the blessings of the New Jerusalem to the overcomers in a special way and allow them to taste the freshness of its enjoyment first. After the millennial kingdom the special blessings of the New Jerusalem will become general blessings that are given to all the saved ones for their enjoyment.

The main blessing in the coming New Jerusalem will be the tree of life. This was God’s goal in the beginning (Gen. 2:8-9), and it is God’s goal at the end (Rev. 22:2). In the coming kingdom God will give this blessing to the overcomers and allow them to have an enjoyable foretaste of His eternal blessing.

## *Feasting with the Lord*

### 1. “Went in with him to the wedding feast”; “I shall by no means drink of this product of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of My Father” (Matt. 25:10; 26:29).

The entire coming kingdom will be a feast; this feast will be what the Father has spread for His Son (22:2-14; Rev. 19:9), and it will be given to all His overcoming seekers throughout all the ages for their enjoyment with His Son (Matt. 8:11). In the kingdom of the heavens the overcomers will enjoy the feast that God has prepared for them from eternity with the Lord.

## *Enjoying the Hidden Christ*

### 1. “To him I will give of the hidden manna” (Rev. 2:17).

The manna in Exodus 16 is a type of Christ coming down from the heavens to be food for the enjoyment of God’s people. This enjoyment is available for all God’s people, but before God, there is a hidden aspect of Christ, which is the hidden manna (v. 33). The hidden manna is not open for everyone; rather, it is hidden for the overcomers, who have rejected the world.

**I**n the coming kingdom this hidden Christ will be fully given to these overcomers for their enjoyment. He will be with them, and they will walk with Him (Rev. 3:4-5). To them, He will have a new name to express His intimate relationship with them (v. 12). To Him, they will have a new name that tells of their secret experience of Him (2:17). They and He, He and they, will enjoy a fellowship that is incomprehensible to others. This enjoyment of Christ will be one of the surpassing blessings of the coming kingdom. Not every saved one will obtain this blessing; it is only for the particular, special enjoyment of the overcomers.

The preceding points outline some of the main items of the blessings of the kingdom of the heavens. The Lord has prepared these blessings for those who love Him, who have set their mind on His heart’s desire, who live for Him, and who fight for Him. Human language cannot adequately describe these blessings. May these blessings cause us to overcome the temptation of the earth! May the glory and blessings of the kingdom of the heavens capture our hearts! **AFC**