

INHERITING THE KINGDOM

*Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the **sons of the kingdom** will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* **Matthew 8:10-12**

*And He [Jesus] said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and **as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom**; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; **Matthew 13:37-38***

Early in Jesus' teaching ministry, He makes it very clear to those around Him that certain "**sons of the kingdom**"--saved, but unfaithful "sons"--will not dine with the Old Testament saints in eternity. They will be outside the kingdom in "outer darkness," sorrowing in remorse for the wasted mortal life they lived on earth. In Jesus' parables concerning "the kingdom," examples such as the two plants that bore no fruit in the "sower,"--**Matt. 13:20-22**, the "evil slave,"--**Matt. 24:50-51**, "the five foolish virgins" --**Matt. 25:11-12**, the "friend without wedding clothes,"--**Matt. 22:11-14**, the "wicked lazy worthless slave"--**Matt. 25:26-30**, are often erroneously thought to be false Christians or unbelievers, when in fact they are representing "**sons of the kingdom**"-- true Christians--who are disobedient, lazy, and carnal. The rest of the New Testament supports these facts which we will see as we continue to study God's Word.

Ephesians 2:8-10 *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ*

Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Notice that "good works" have nothing to do with getting saved; we are to do "good works" because we are saved. The following verse also emphasizes this:

Titus 3:5 *"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,"*

Now that we are going to heaven, God encourages us to "work heartily," being faithful obedient Christians, and we will be "rewarded." If we are lazy and disobedient we will "receive the consequences" of our sin. Not the "Hades" consequences--Jesus paid for that--but loss of rewards and eternal shame. Consider the following verses;

Colossians 3:23-25 *"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. For he [the Christian] who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality."*

2 Corinthians 5:10 *"For we [Christians] must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."*

1 Corinthians 3:14-15 *If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

Looking at the above verses, we see that at the judgment seat of Christ some believers are going to "suffer loss; but they themselves will be saved!" They will "receive the consequences" of their wrong doing, and be "recompensed" for their "bad" deeds. What does this mean? What could they forfeit and what could they lose at their judgment? The REWARD OF THE INHERITANCE.

Some Christians think that all true believers get rewards and an inheritance in heaven. Others believe that those who say they are Christians yet continue to practice sin are not really Christians. Both of these theories are incorrect. The Bible makes it very clear that salvation

is a free gift; our behavior has absolutely nothing to do with it. But our behavior and works as true Christians are rewarded here and in eternity, and the eternal rewards are referred to as an "inheritance" as we saw earlier. Let us look at God's Word and see what He has to say.

Galatians 5:16-21 *"But I say, [Christian] walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those [Christians] who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

Here Paul encourages the Galatian believers to be led by the Spirit rather than the flesh. Notice the list of things that can be done in the flesh. If true Christians practice such things, verse 21 says they will not "inherit the kingdom of God." It does not say they will lose their salvation, or that these people were never saved. The warning is to true Christians concerning possible loss of rewards, and NO INHERITANCE.

1 Corinthians 6:8-10 *"On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren. Or do you not know that the unrighteous [Christians] will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God."*

Here the Apostle Paul warns the Corinthian saints as he warned the Galatians, "do not be deceived!" If they practice unconfessed sin they "will not inherit the kingdom of God." NO INHERITANCE.

Ephesians 5:1-7 *"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. **But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints**; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. **For this you know with certainty, that no** [saint who is] **immoral or***

impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God [discipline] comes upon the sons of disobedience [carnal Christians]. Therefore do not be partakers with them;"

As the apostle Paul warned the Galatian and Corinthian saints, he also faithfully warns the Ephesians of what "is proper among saints." Those saints who die practicing sin, or are practicing sin when the Lord returns will have no inheritance. Here he again adds the warning, "Let no one deceive you with empty words." There are many who try to argue with and distort these obvious Biblical truths. They are as Jude 4 warns, "...ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness [no self restraint, selfishness]..." But the wrath of God WILL come upon those carnal Christians who practice what it says in verses 4 and 5. These are the "sons of disobedience," in verse 6. Can a believer be a "partaker," and become one of them? The answer is "yes," but we are warned not to be disobedient sons, incurring our Father's wrath, and losing the REWARD OF THE INHERITANCE.

Colossians 3:5-6 "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them."

Here the apostle warns the saints at Colossae to not be "sons of disobedience." As he has warned the other saints, this will bring about God's wrath, and LOSS OF INHERITANCE, if not corrected.

FINAL WARNINGS TO THE CHURCHES

Now we will focus in on the seven churches in the book of Revelation, chapters two and three. We see that Jesus is addressing the "*angels*," (the messengers) elders of the individual churches. The elders are the ones responsible for their local church. In each letter Jesus Himself points out specific praises or problems in the church He is addressing. We see that all the problems in these churches are the result of the true believers in these churches disobeying principles of God's Word. As we saw earlier, they are the "sons of disobedience." They are carnal, fleshly, worldly, saved Christians who are jeopardizing their inheritance. One phrase

repeated to each church is, *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."* Some people just don't listen!

Ephesus Rev. 2:1-7

Christ commended the Ephesian Christians in many areas. They started out well. They had only one problem. They had *"fallen"* and *"left their first love."* They are told to *"repent and do the deeds you did at first."* If they didn't repent He would *"remove their lampstand."* There are many Christians *"in the dark"* today because of disobedience and laziness. If they repent before the lampstand is removed and become *"overcomers,"* they will inherit the kingdom. One of the rewards in the kingdom is *"to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."* This reward is not included in salvation--it must be earned.

Smyrna Rev. 2:8-11

Smyrna is known as the persecuted faithful church. They are not told to repent, but to continue *"to be faithful unto death."* (Being martyred for their testimony will earn them a crown of life. This crown, worn for eternity, communicates to everyone in heaven how this person lived his or her mortal life). If they continue to be faithful and overcome, they will not be *"hurt by the second death."* Christians who have not been faithful in verbally sharing the gospel will have the blood of those they did not witness to on their hands (Ezek. 3:18-21, 33:1-9, Acts 18:6, 20:26). This will be brought out at the White Throne Judgment when all the unbelievers have their day in court, and they see those who were saved, but were not willing to open their mouths to them. The cowardly believers will be *"hurt"* when they see those people that they were ashamed to share the gospel with thrown into the lake of fire--the second death.

Pergamum Rev. 2:12-17

In the Pergamum church there was some obedience. There were also some problems with bad doctrine; the teaching of Balaam, (Num. 22-25) which was similar to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. These Christians with bad doctrine were causing other Christians to *"stumble"* by eating *"things sacrificed to idols, and committing acts of immorality."* Notice how Jesus is going to fight against these disobedient Christians with the sword of His mouth if they don't repent. However, if they overcome, they will receive the rewards of a special name and special food in the kingdom.

Thyatira Rev. 2:18-29

In the church of Thyatira, Jesus says their last works were better than the first, but He still had things against them. A woman teacher, Jezebel, was causing some to fall into sin. Jesus gave her time to repent, but she did not. This church had allowed female leadership teaching in the church, contrary to Biblical standards (I Tim. 3, Titus 1). Verse 23 states that the Lord will *"kill her children with death."* This is physical death, and as the verse goes on to say, *"I am He who searches the minds and hearts."* He will give to each one of you according to your deeds. Verse 26 says: *"and he who overcomes. [finishes the race], and he who keeps My deeds to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations."* But if you do not overcome (stop running the race), you will not rule and reign with Christ, the *"Morning Star."* (Rev 22:16, 2 Tim. 2:11-13).

Sardis Rev. 3:1-6

The Sardis church had a name that they were alive, but they were dead. Jesus says: *"You have a few people in Sardis who have not SOILED their garments; and they shall walk with me in white for they are worthy."* Only a few Christians in the Sardis church will be honored. Can a true Christian SOIL his or her garment? Jesus says, "YES." The only saints who come back with Christ to rule and reign are the ones clothed in white (Rev. 19:7-8, 14). The saints that finish the race (overcome) will have a white garment and their name will not be BLOTTED OUT OF THE BOOK OF LIFE. Remember, believers are the only ones in the book of life, and a believer CANNOT LOSE HIS SALVATION. Those *"blotted out"* lose rewards such as; ruling and reigning with Christ, their name confessed before the Father and His angels, and having access to the tree of life or the city (Rev. 21:27, 22:14-15, 19, Matt.10:32,33).

Philadelphia Rev. 3:7-13

The Philadelphia church is an example of the kind of Christians all should be striving to be, not only as a church, but also personally and nationally. This can only happen if we are OBEDIENT to THE KING, JESUS CHRIST (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15). Jesus states that these saints *"kept My word,"* that is, they obeyed the whole Bible, and did not use "grace," or "not gifted" as excuses for disobedience. And they had not *"denied My name;"* they were evangelistic, not ashamed to witness and share the gospel of their Savior. Their rewards are that they will be a *"pillar in the temple,"* having the name of the Father, the new Jerusalem, and Jesus' new name written on them. These rewards are only for faithful Christians.

Laodicea Rev. 3:14-22

The last church, which also typifies the end-time church, is the Laodicean church. They were just like the many of today's born-again believers. Jesus has absolutely nothing good to say about this church. Many incorrectly interpret this to be an unbelieving church, or that Christ is talking to unbelievers in this church. Anything addressed to "the church" in the New Testament is addressed to "believers!" These Laodiceans, like most American Christians, think they are doing just fine because they are wealthy, like the saved rich man in Luke 12:15-21. Christ tells them to buy from Him pure gold refined in the fire and white garments so that they won't be naked. Can you buy your salvation, or your way to Heaven (Acts 8:20)? Can Christians ride back with Christ with NO GARMENT (Revelation 19:14)? Will they ride back with a DEFILED GARMENT (Rev. 3:4)? This is the Lord's verbal rebuke to those Christians who are not obedient. He does this because He loves them (Heb. 12:5-10). He will also chasten them to try to bring repentance. Disobedient Christians can be zealous and repent. But we see that they can also close the door on Christ and leave Him on the outside of their lives. The Lord disciplines those who He loves. DO NOT think you are above the Lord's chastening. (Pro. 16:18). (Also refer to Matt. 22:1-13)

THE BRIDE

"Will all Christians be the bride?" NO! Right now we are the "espoused," "engaged," "betrothed" bride (Matt. 1:18, Lk. 1:27, 2:5, II Cor. 11:2). The marriage comes later. Read Revelation 19:7-8. In verse 7 the "betrothed" bride has made herself ready. How is this accomplished? Verse 8 answers, "It was granted to her to be arrayed in fine linen clean and bright, for the fine linen is the **righteous acts** of the saints." We see that it is our responsibility as Christians to weave our own wedding garment. Salvation is FREE, but discipleship is costly, (Matt. 10:32-39; Luke 14:25-35). We often quote Eph. 2:8-9, but what about verse 10? *"We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them,"* It's not what "we" think is good, but what God has prepared for us, such as evangelism; preaching the gospel, obeying sound doctrine (Mark 16:15), and making disciples (Matt. 28:19,20). Few Christians are doing these things today, and the ones not obeying will suffer loss! Also refer to these scriptures; Isa. 61:10, 62:5; Jer. 2:32, and see our study "Kingdom Rewards and The Bride of Christ."

THE CITY

Read Revelation 22:12-15. Notice that in verse 12 Jesus says He is coming quickly and His "reward" is with Him. This concerns only "believers." The unbelievers have already been cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 21:12, 24-27) which is not located on the new heaven or new earth, and has been in existence long before the new heaven and earth are created (Rev. 19:20, 20:10). Jesus will be on the new earth only with "believers" (Rev. 21:22-23), and He tells us who will not enter into the city (Rev. 21:27, 22:15). Do you know any Christians like this? Verse 14 refers to all the faithful believers from all ages. Verse 15 of chapter 22 is referring to all the disobedient believers who will be outside the city. That word "outside" means "just" outside or "in the immediate proximity." Disobedient Christians will be outside the city, unable to come in.

CONCLUSION

Our prayer is that you will not be one of the disobedient Christians who dies in their sins and is not able to enter in through the city gates (Rev. 22:14-15). If you are one of the disobedient, you will suffer loss (1 Cor. 3:15, Ezek. 44:9-16), and your name may be blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5). To avoid this, just be obedient, knowing what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:15-17), so that you may receive a full reward (2 Jn. 1:8). This is not an exhaustive study, but it is written to open your eyes to what the scriptures teach about the inheritance. Remember, out of all the believers (over 600,000 Jewish men) that Moses took out of Egypt (with the intention of taking them all to the Promised Land), only two (plus the Levites) went into the Promised Land, Joshua and Caleb with their families. The rest lost their inheritance (Num. 14), and their lives. Even Moses could not enter because of sin (Num. 20:8-12, 24-29, Deut 3:25-27, 32:48-51). These examples are for Christians today (1 Cor.10:1-11).

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. Col. 3:23-24