

Message Nine

The Lamb Whom the Overcoming Firstfruits Follow

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

Rev. 14:1-5—And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. ²And I heard a voice out of heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; and the voice which I heard was like *the sound* of harp-singers playing on their harps. ³And they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the hundred and forty-four thousand, who have been purchased from the earth. ⁴These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were purchased from among men *as* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵And in their mouth no lie was found; they are without blemish.

Gen. 5:22-24—And Enoch walked with God after he had begotten Methuselah three hundred years, and he begot *more* sons and daughters. ²³And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty-five years. ²⁴And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Heb. 11:5-6—By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God. ⁶But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing *to Him*, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Matt. 24:45-51—Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blessed is that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷Truly I say to you that he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸But if that evil slave says in his heart, My master delays, ⁴⁹And begins to beat his fellow slaves and eats and drinks with the drunken, ⁵⁰The master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know, ⁵¹And will cut him asunder and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

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

Rev. 14:1-5—And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. ²And I heard a voice out of heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; and the voice which I heard was like *the sound* of harp-singers playing on their harps. ³And they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the hundred and forty-four thousand, who have been purchased from the earth. ⁴These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were purchased from among men *as* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵And in their mouth no lie was found; they are without blemish.

- A. The firstfruits are the living overcomers, who will be the first ripe ones in God's field; hence, they will be reaped before the harvest as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb:

1. The firstfruits will be caught up to the heavenly Mount Zion, to the place of God's dwelling in the third heaven, in order to be in the presence of God and Christ.

2. The meaning of rapture is to be taken into the Lord's presence; in order to be taken into the Lord's presence, we must be in His presence today—Luke 21:36; 2 Cor. 2:10; Hosea 6:2; 2 Tim. 4:8; Acts 26:16.

Luke 21:36—But be watchful at every time, beseeching that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.

2 Cor. 2:10—But whom you forgive anything, I also *forgive*; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, *it is* for your sake in the person of Christ;

Hosea 6:2—He will enliven us after two days; On the third day He will raise us up, And we will live in His presence.

2 Tim. 4:8—Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.

Acts 26:16—But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this *purpose*, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;

3. The rapture is for defeating the enemy and satisfying God; the Lord needs the man-child to fight against His enemy, but He needs the firstfruits even more for His satisfaction and enjoyment—Rev. 12:5; 14:1, 4b.

Rev. 12:5—And she brought forth a son, a man-child, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

Rev. 14:1—And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

Rev. 14:4—These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were purchased from among men *as* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

B. The Bible reveals two aspects of the rapture: the rapture of the overcomers before the great tribulation and the rapture of the majority of the believers at the end of the great tribulation—Matt. 24:40-41; Luke 21:36; Rev. 3:10; 1 Thes. 4:15-17; Rev. 12:5; 14:1.

Matt. 24:40-41—At that time two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left.
⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left.

Luke 21:36—But be watchful at every time, beseeching that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.

Rev. 3:10—Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.

1 Thes. 4:15-17—For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are living, who are left remaining unto the coming of the Lord, shall by no means precede those who have fallen asleep; ¹⁶Because the Lord Himself, with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are living, who are left remaining, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will be always with the Lord.

Rev. 12:5—And she brought forth a son, a man-child, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

Rev. 14:1—And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

- C. In Leviticus 23:10 we see a type of the rapture—the type of the crop ripening in the field—Matt. 13:24; Rev. 14:14-16:

Lev. 23:10—Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, When you come into the land which I am giving you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest;

Matt. 13:24—Another parable He set before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man sowing good seed in his field.

Rev. 14:14-16—And I saw, and behold, *there was* a white cloud, and on the cloud One like the Son of Man sitting, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. ¹⁵And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, Send forth Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come because the harvest of the earth is ripe. ¹⁶And He who sat on the cloud thrust His sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped.

1. The reaping of God's crop is what we call the rapture; this reaping indicates that the believers will be taken away from the earth—Matt. 13:30, 39b.

Matt. 13:30—Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Collect first the tares and bind them into bundles to burn them up, but the wheat gather into my barn.

Matt. 13:39—And the enemy who sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is the consummation of the age; and the reapers are angels.

2. Part of the crop—the firstfruits—ripens earlier and is reaped earlier; the rest of the crop—the harvest—ripens later and is reaped later.

3. According to Revelation 14, there are two kinds of rapture—the rapture of the firstfruits and the rapture of the harvest—vv. 4b, 14-16.

Rev. 14:4—These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were purchased from among men *as* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Rev. 14:14-16—And I saw, and behold, *there was* a white cloud, and on the cloud One like the Son of Man sitting, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. ¹⁵And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, Send forth Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has

come because the harvest of the earth is ripe. ¹⁶And He who sat on the cloud thrust His sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped.

- D. The firstfruits are raptured to the house of God in Zion as the fresh enjoyment to God; this is for God's satisfaction—Exo. 23:19a; Lev. 23:10; cf. John 20:17a.

Exo. 23:19—The first of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of Jehovah your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Lev. 23:10—Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, When you come into the land which I am giving you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest;

cf. John 20:17—Jesus said to her, Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.

- E. The firstfruits have the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father written on their foreheads; this is the designation of their being one with the Lamb and with the Father and of their belonging to Them—Rev. 14:1b.

Rev. 14:1—And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

- F. The firstfruits are the earliest among God's crop to reach maturity—Heb. 5:14—6:1; 1 Cor. 2:6; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15:

Heb. 5:14—6:1—But solid food is for the full-grown, who because of practice have their faculties exercised for discriminating between both good and evil.

¹Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,

1 Cor. 2:6—But we do speak wisdom among those who are full-grown, yet a wisdom not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are being brought to nought;

Eph. 4:13—Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Phil. 3:15—Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.

1. To be transformed is to be changed in our natural life; to be matured is to be filled with the divine life that changes us—Rom. 12:2; Eph. 3:19b.

Rom. 12:2—And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

Eph. 3:19—And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

2. For God's expression there is the need of maturity; only a mature life can bear God's image and exercise His dominion—Gen. 1:26; Rom. 5:10, 17, 21.

Gen. 1:26—And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Rom. 5:10—For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,

Rom. 5:17—For if, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Rom. 5:21—In order that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

A. The way to escape death and obtain the testimony of being well pleasing to God is to walk with God—Gen. 5:22-24; Heb. 11:5-6:

Gen. 5:22-24—And Enoch walked with God after he had begotten Methuselah three hundred years, and he begot *more* sons and daughters. ²³And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty-five years. ²⁴And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Heb. 11:5-6—By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God. ⁶But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing *to Him*, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

1. To walk with God is not to override God, not to be presumptuous, not to do things according to our own concept and desire, not to do things according to the current of the age, and not to do anything without God—cf. Psa. 19:12-13; Josh. 9:14b; Luke 24:15.

cf. Psa. 19:12-13—Who can discern *his* errors? Clear me of my secret faults. ¹³Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Do not let them have dominion over me; Then I will be blameless and cleared Of great transgression.

cf. Josh. 9:14—And the men took some of their provisions, but they did not ask for the counsel of Jehovah.

cf. Luke 24:15—And while they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.

2. To walk with God is to take Him as our center and everything, to live and do things according to God and with God, according to His revelation and leading, and to do everything with Him—Rom. 8:4, 13-14; Gal. 2:2a; 2 Cor. 5:14-15.

Rom. 8:4—That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

Rom. 8:13-14—For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Gal. 2:2—And I went up according to revelation, and I laid before them the gospel which I proclaim among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of repute, lest perhaps I should be running, or had run, in vain.

2 Cor. 5:14-15—For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

3. To walk with God means that we do not live by what we are or can do but by the immortal life, which is Christ Himself—vv. 4, 9.

2 Cor. 5:4—For also, we who are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened, in that we do not desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

2 Cor. 5:9—Therefore also we are determined, whether at home or abroad, to gain the honor of being well pleasing to Him.

4. To walk with God is to have habitual fellowship with God, to be in constant touch with the Lord, and to be under His constant infusion—1 John 1:3; Phil. 4:6; 2 Cor. 3:16, 18.

1 John 1:3—That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Phil. 4:6—In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

2 Cor. 3:16—But whenever *their heart* turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

2 Cor. 3:18—But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

5. To walk with God is to continually exercise our spirit to enjoy the Blessed Trinity—Jude 14, 19-21.

Jude 14—And Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied also of these, saying, Behold, the Lord came with myriads of His saints

Jude 19-21—These are those who make divisions, soulless, having no spirit. ²⁰But you, beloved, building up yourselves upon your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹Keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

6. To walk with God implies the denying of our self and everything that is of our self so that we may be one with Him; it implies that we have given ourselves to Him, that we will give in to Him and let Him take the lead—Matt. 16:24-25; 2 Cor. 2:13-14.

Matt. 16:24-25—Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.

2 Cor. 2:13-14—I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia. ¹⁴But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place.

B. To walk with God is to walk by faith—5:7; Heb. 11:5-6:

2 Cor. 5:7—(For we walk by faith, not by appearance)—

Heb. 11:5-6—By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God. ⁶But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing *to Him*, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

1. Faith means that we believe that God is—vv. 1-2, 6; 2 Cor. 4:13, 18:

Heb. 11:1-2—Now faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For in this the elders have obtained a good testimony.

Heb. 11:6—But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing *to Him*, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

2 Cor. 4:13—And having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, “I believed, therefore I spoke,” we also believe, therefore we also speak,

2 Cor. 4:18—Because we do not regard the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

a. Without faith it is impossible to please God, to make God happy—Heb. 11:6a.

Heb. 11:6—But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing *to Him*, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

b. To believe that God is, is to believe that He is everything to us and that we are nothing—John 8:58; Eccl. 1:2.

John 8:58—Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham came into being, I am.

Eccl. 1:2—Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

c. To believe that God is implies that we are not; He must be the only One, the unique One, in everything, and we must be nothing in everything—Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5.

Gen. 5:24—And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Heb. 11:5—By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God.

- d. To believe that God is, is to deny our self; in the whole universe He is, and all of us are nothing—Luke 9:23.

Luke 9:23—And He said to *them* all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

- e. I should not be anything; I should not exist; only He should exist—it is no longer I, but Christ—Gal. 2:20.

Gal. 2:20—I am crucified with Christ; and *it is* no longer I *who* live, but *it is* Christ *who* lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the *faith* of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

- f. At his conversion the Lord told Saul of Tarsus, “I am Jesus”—Acts 9:5:

Acts 9:5—And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He *said*, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.

- (1) The Lord was saying, “I am the great I Am; I am the One who is; you must believe that I am and that you are not.”

- (2) Eventually, Saul was over, and Paul came up—13:9.

Acts 13:9—But Saul, who is also Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him

- g. This is faith—“O the joy of having nothing and being nothing, seeing nothing but a living Christ in glory, and being careful for nothing but His interests down here”—J. N. Darby.

2. Faith means that we believe that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him—Heb. 11:6; Gen. 15:1; Phil. 3:8, 14:

Heb. 11:6—But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to *Him*, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Gen. 15:1—After these things the word of Jehovah came to Abram in a vision, saying, Do not be afraid, Abram; I am your shield *and* your exceedingly great reward.

Phil. 3:8—But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count *them* as refuse that I may gain Christ

Phil. 3:14—I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called *me* upward.

- a. Enoch’s reward was the highest degree of life—escape from death—Heb. 11:5a; 2 Cor. 5:4; Rom. 8:6, 10-11; 5:17.

Heb. 11:5—By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God.

2 Cor. 5:4—For also, we who are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened, in that we do not desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Rom. 8:6—For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Rom. 8:10-11—But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

Rom. 5:17—For if, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

- b. The Lord is a rewarder, and we need to be His seekers—Psa. 27:4, 8; 42:1-2; 43:4; 73:25; 119:2, 10.

Psa. 27:4—One thing I have asked from Jehovah; That do I seek: To dwell in the house of Jehovah All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of Jehovah, And to inquire in His temple.

Psa. 27:8—*When You say, Seek My face, To You my heart says, Your face, O Jehovah, will I seek.*

Psa. 42:1-2—As the hart pants After the streams of water, So my soul pants For You, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, For the living God. When will I come and appear Before God?

Psa. 43:4—And I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And I will praise You with the harp, O God, my God.

Psa. 73:25—Whom do I have in heaven *but You?* And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth.

Psa. 119:2—Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with all *their* heart.

Psa. 119:10—With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments.

- C. Enoch, as the first person to be raptured, is the representative of all the overcomers who will be raptured while they are living—Matt. 24:37-51; Rev. 14:1; Luke 21:34-36:

Matt. 24:37-51—For just as the days of Noah were, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸For as they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day in which Noah entered into the ark, ³⁹And they did not know *that judgment was coming* until the flood came and took all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰At that time two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left. ⁴²Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes. ⁴³But know this, that if the householder had known in which watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴For this reason you also be

ready, because at an hour when you do not expect *it*, the Son of Man is coming. ⁴⁵Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blessed is that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷Truly I say to you that he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸But if that evil slave says in his heart, My master delays, ⁴⁹And begins to beat his fellow slaves and eats and drinks with the drunken, ⁵⁰The master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know, ⁵¹And will cut him asunder and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

Rev. 14:1—And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

Luke 21:34-36—But take heed to yourselves lest perhaps your hearts be weighed down with debauchery and drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day come upon you suddenly as a snare. ³⁵For it will come in upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth. ³⁶But be watchful at every time, beseeching that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.

1. Our being raptured depends on our being mature in the divine life by our walking with God—Heb. 6:1a.

Heb. 6:1—Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,

2. Enoch continually walked upward with God day and night for three centuries, becoming closer to God and more one with God each day until “he was not, for God took him”—Gen. 5:24; cf. S. S. 8:5a.

Gen. 5:24—And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

cf. S. S. 8:5—Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, Leaning on her beloved? I awakened you under the apple tree: There your mother was in labor with you; There she was in labor *and* brought you forth.

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

Matt. 24:45-51—Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blessed is that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷Truly I say to you that he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸But if that evil slave says in his heart, My master delays, ⁴⁹And begins to beat his fellow slaves and eats and drinks with the drunken, ⁵⁰The master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know, ⁵¹And will cut him asunder and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

- A. God has a household and a household administration, an economy, to dispense Himself as food to the members of His household for His expression—1 Tim. 1:4; 3:15; Eph. 2:19.
1 Tim. 1:4—Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God’s economy, which is in faith.
1 Tim. 3:15—But if I delay, *I write* that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
Eph. 2:19—So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
- B. God has set faithful and prudent slaves over His household as household administrators, stewards, channels of supply, to give His people food at the proper time—Matt. 24:45; 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:10; Phil. 1:25.
Matt. 24:45—Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time?
1 Cor. 9:17—If I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship.
Eph. 3:2—If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,
1 Cor. 4:1—A man should account us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.
1 Pet. 4:10—Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.
Phil. 1:25—And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith,
- C. *Give them food* refers to ministering the word of God and Christ as the life supply to the believers in the church; Christ as the life-giving Spirit is our food, embodied and realized in the word of life—John 6:57, 63, 68; Acts 5:20:
John 6:57—As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
John 6:63—It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.
John 6:68—Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life,
Acts 5:20—Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.
1. In order to enjoy the Lord as our spiritual food so that we can feed others, we must pray over and muse on His word, tasting and enjoying it through careful considering—Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15; Ezek. 3:1-4.
Eph. 6:17-18—And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which *Spirit* is the word of God, ¹⁸By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every

time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

Psa. 119:15—I will muse upon Your precepts And regard Your ways.

Ezek. 3:1-4—Then He said to me, Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. ²So I opened my mouth, and He gave me that scroll to eat. ³And He said to me, Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your inward parts with this scroll that I am giving you. And I ate *it*, and it was like honey in my mouth in *its* sweetness. ⁴Then He said to me, Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.

2. We must devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word—Acts 6:4; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8; John 7:37-39; cf. Heb. 7:25; 8:2.

Acts 6:4—But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.

2 Cor. 3:6—Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, *ministers* not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Cor. 3:8—How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory?

John 7:37-39—Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. ³⁹But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for *the* Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

cf. Heb. 7:25—Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them.

cf. Heb. 8:2—A Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

- D. To say in our heart that our Master delays is to love the present evil age and not to love the Lord's appearing—Matt. 24:48; 2 Tim. 4:8, 10; cf. Acts 26:16:

Matt. 24:48—But if that evil slave says in his heart, My master delays,

2 Tim. 4:8—Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.

2 Tim. 4:10—For Demas has abandoned me, having loved the present age, and has gone to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia; Titus to Dalmatia.

cf. Acts 26:16—But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this *purpose*, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;

1. We must beware of covetousness, not storing up treasure for ourselves but being rich toward God—Luke 12:15-20; 2 Cor. 6:10; Eph. 3:8.

Luke 12:15-20—And He said to them, Watch and guard yourself from all covetousness, for no one's life is in the abundance of his possessions. ¹⁶And He told

them a parable, saying, The land of a certain rich man brought forth abundantly. ¹⁷And he reasoned in himself, saying, What shall I do, for I have no *place* where I may gather my crops? ¹⁸And he said, I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and I will gather there all my wheat and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; rest, eat, drink, be merry. ²⁰But God said to him, Foolish one, this night they are requiring your soul from you; and the things which you have prepared, whose will they be?

2 Cor. 6:10—As made sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things.

Eph. 3:8—To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

2. “Remember Lot’s wife” is a solemn warning to the world-loving believers— Luke 17:31-32; cf. Rom. 1:21, 25.

Luke 17:31-32—In that day, he who will be on the housetop and his goods in the house, let him not come down to take them away; and he who is in the field, likewise, let him not turn back to the things behind. ³²Remember Lot’s wife.

cf. Rom. 1:21—Because though they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God or thank *Him*, but *rather* became vain in their reasonings, and their heart, lacking understanding, was darkened.

cf. Rom. 1:25—Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

3. We must be watchful and beseeching so that the day of the Lord’s coming would not come upon us suddenly as a snare—Luke 21:34-36; cf. Matt. 2:3.

Luke 21:34-36—But take heed to yourselves lest perhaps your hearts be weighed down with debauchery and drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day come upon you suddenly as a snare. ³⁵For it will come in upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth. ³⁶But be watchful at every time, beseeching that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.

cf. Matt. 2:3—And when Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him.

- E. To beat our fellow slaves is to mistreat our fellow believers—24:49a; 18:3-7; Acts 9:4:

Matt. 24:49—And begins to beat his fellow slaves and eats and drinks with the drunken,

Matt. 18:3-7—And said, Truly I say to you, Unless you turn and become like little children, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens. ⁴He therefore who will humble himself like this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens. ⁵And whoever receives one such little child because of My name, receives Me; ⁶And whoever stumbles one of these little ones who believe into Me, it is *more* profitable for him that a great millstone be hung around his neck and he be drowned in the open sea. ⁷Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! For it is necessary for stumbling blocks to come, but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes.

Acts 9:4—And he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?

1. We must not judge and condemn our fellow believers but be kind to them, tenderhearted, forgiving them, even as God in Christ forgave us—Luke 6:37; Eph. 4:31-32.

Luke 6:37—And do not judge, and you shall by no means be judged; and do not condemn, and you shall by no means be condemned; release, and you will be released;

Eph. 4:31-32—Let all bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and evil speaking be removed from you, with all malice. ³²And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ also forgave you.

2. We must not revile or criticize our brothers but consider them more excellent than ourselves—1 Cor. 6:10; Phil. 2:2-3, 29:

1 Cor. 6:10—Nor thieves nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor the rapacious will inherit the kingdom of God.

Phil. 2:2-3—Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing, ³*Doing* nothing by way of selfish ambition nor by way of vainglory, but in lowliness of mind considering one another more excellent than yourselves;

Phil. 2:29—Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and hold such in honor,

- a. To revile a brother is to criticize or demean him harshly with abusive language—cf. Luke 17:2.

cf. Luke 17:2—It is more profitable for him if a millstone is put around his neck and he is hurled into the sea than to stumble one of these little ones.

- b. Those who take in reviling words bear the same responsibility as those who speak reviling words; such words damage the Body.

- c. God will never entrust authority to those who by nature like to criticize others.

3. We must not lord it over our fellow believers but serve them as a slave to feed them with the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit—1 Pet. 5:3; Matt. 20:25-28:

1 Pet. 5:3—Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.

Matt. 20:25-28—But Jesus called them to *Him* and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them. ²⁶It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant, ²⁷And whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave; ²⁸Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

- a. For one to lord it over the saints means that he replaces the Lord in their lives by making decisions for them or by telling them where to move, thus, insulting the headship and lordship of Christ.

b. If we tell others where they should go without encouraging them to pray, seek the Lord's leading, and have the proper fellowship in the Body, this is a great insult to the Lord!

F. To eat and drink with the drunken is to keep company with worldly people, who are drunk with worldly things—24:49b; cf. Eph. 5:18:

Matt. 24:49—And begins to beat his fellow slaves and eats and drinks with the drunken,

cf. Eph. 5:18—And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,

1. Because of their divine nature and holy standing, the believers should not be yoked together with the unbelievers; this should be applied to all intimate relationships between believers and unbelievers, not only to marriage and business—2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 15:33; cf. Prov. 13:20.

2 Cor. 6:14—Do not become dissimilarly yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness?

1 Cor. 15:33—Do not be deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals.

cf. Prov. 13:20—He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be troubled.

2. We must flee youthful lusts and pursue the all-inclusive Christ with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart—2 Tim. 2:22.

2 Tim. 2:22—But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.