

HWMR: EXPERIENCING, ENJOYING, AND EXPRESSING CHRIST (5) (Week 9)

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 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and fortyfour thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.
- Rev. 14:2 And 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.
- Rev. 14:3 And 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.
- 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. 14:5 And in their mouth no lie was found; they are without blemish.
- Gen. 5:22 And Enoch walked with God after he had begotten Methuselah three hundred years, and he begot more sons and daughters.
- Gen. 5:23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty-five years.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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?
- Matt. 24:46 Blessed is that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.
- Matt. 24:47 Truly I say to you that he will set him over all his possessions.
- Matt. 24:48 But if that evil slave says in his heart, My master delays,
- Matt. 24:49 And begins to beat his fellow slaves and eats and drinks with the drunken,
- Matt. 24:50 The master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know,
- Matt. 24:51 And will cut him asunder and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

Day 1

- 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.*

In the Old Testament we see the type of the firstfruits. Once the children of Israel entered the good land, each received his allotted portion of the land. They were to labor on the land and **bring the firstfruits of their harvest to the temple, to God's house, for His satisfaction**. The type of the overcoming firstfruits draws from human farming. A farmer usually has a farm, a barn, and his house. When the firstfruits are reaped, the farmer brings the firstfruits not into the barn but **into his house for the enjoyment of his family**. Later, when the bulk of the harvest is reaped, it is placed in the barn. Likewise, Revelation 14 reveals that the firstfruits among God's people are to be **taken up directly to God**, for Him to have the first taste for His enjoyment and satisfaction. The firstfruits are taken not to the air but to Mount Zion, into God's presence, for the Father to enjoy. (*The Ministry of the Word*, vol. 30, No. 2, chapter 45)

Day 2

Heb. 6:1 - Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity...

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,

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

- A. The firstfruits are the **living overcomers**, who will be the **first ripe ones in God's field**; hence, they will be reaped before the harvest as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb:
 1. The firstfruits will be **caught up to the heavenly Mount Zion**, to the place of God's dwelling in the third heaven, in order to be in the presence of God and Christ.
 2. The meaning of rapture is to be taken into the Lord's presence; in order to be taken into the Lord's presence, **we must be in His presence today**—Luke 21:36; 2 Cor. 2:10; Hosea 6:2; 2 Tim. 4:8; Acts 26:16.
 3. The **rapture** is for defeating the enemy and satisfying God; the Lord needs the **man-child** to **fight against His enemy**, but He needs the **firstfruits** even more for His **satisfaction and enjoyment**—Rev. 12:5; 14:1, 4b.
- B. The Bible reveals two aspects of the rapture: the **rapture of the overcomers before** the great tribulation and the **rapture of the majority of the believers at the end** of the great tribulation—Matt. 24:40-41; Luke 21:36; Rev. 3:10; 1 Thes. 4:15-17; Rev. 12:5; 14:1.
- C. In Leviticus 23:10 we see a type of the rapture—the type of the crop ripening in the field—Matt. 13:24; Rev. 14:14-16:
 1. The reaping of God's crop is what we call the rapture; this reaping indicates that the believers will be taken away from the earth—Matt. 13:30, 39b.
 2. Part of the crop—the **firstfruits**—**ripens earlier and is reaped earlier**; the rest of the crop—the harvest—ripens later and is reaped later.
 3. According to Revelation 14, there are two kinds of rapture—the rapture of the **firstfruits** and the rapture of the **harvest**—vv. 4b, 14-16.
- D. The firstfruits are raptured to the house of God in Zion as the **fresh enjoyment to God**; this is for God's satisfaction—Exo. 23:19a; Lev. 23:10; cf. John 20:17a.
- E. The firstfruits have the **name of the Lamb** and the **name of His Father written on their foreheads**; this is the designation of their being one with the Lamb and with the Father and of their belonging to Them—Rev. 14:1b.

- F. The firstfruits are the **earliest** among God's crop **to reach maturity**—Heb. 5:14—6:1; 1 Cor. 2:6; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15:
1. To be **transformed** is **to be changed in our natural life**; to be **matured** is **to be filled with the divine life that changes us**—Rom. 12:2; Eph. 3:19b.
 2. For God's expression there is the need of maturity; **only a mature life can bear God's image and exercise His dominion**—Gen. 1:26; Rom. 5:10, 17, 21.

On the morning of His resurrection, the Lord said to Mary, "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" (John 20:17). The **Lord was the first of the firstfruits** because He was the first One raised from the dead. In John 20:17 He was telling Mary to not touch Him, **because the Father had not yet eaten of and enjoyed the freshness of His resurrection**. She could not be allowed to get the first taste. **The Father had to get the first taste.**

Who gets the first taste, the first touch, of our days? There are many things to which we need to learn to say, "Do not touch me!" **Does the Father get the first taste or does our device?** When we receive a new notification on our phone, we want to see who it is from and what was sent. Do not fall into that trap. We must exercise forethought; we need to know ourselves, even our weaknesses. We need to put that thing aside and say, "Do not touch me! I am about to appear before my God!"

Moreover, if we want to be among the firstfruits, there are many things in our daily living to which we have to say, **"Do not touch me!"** For example, while driving we may come across a billboard to which we have to say, "Do not touch me!" If we were to look at that billboard, we would be defiled. Advertisements and many other things that appear on our phones and devices cause defilement. We therefore must be determined to not let them touch us. To be the firstfruits, we have to say, "Do not touch me!" We have to be careful even of the people in our lives. They may come to us, or we may go to them, and as a result, our talking together may defile us.

The firstfruits are not defiled, for they are virgins. Moreover, **no lie is found in their mouth**. Nothing defiling should pass our lips. A lie is an expression of Satan. John 8:44 says that he is a liar and the father of lies. Any lie, no matter how slight, is a lie. We can even use the truth to lie by not speaking the whole truth. This is an expression of Satan. We need to make sure that lies do not touch our lips. We should not allow our lips to participate in gossip or engage in loose talk. When gossip comes to our ears, we should say, "Do not touch me!" We need to flee from loose talk. In the church loose talk spreads death more than any attack from outside. If we want to be the firstfruits, we must learn to say to many things in our lives, "Do not touch me! The Father must be first." (*The Ministry of the Word*, vol. 30, No. 2, chapter 45)

Day 3

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.*

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.

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.

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

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

1. To walk with God is not to override God, not to be presumptuous, not to do things according to our own concept and desire, not to do things according to the current of the age, and **not to do anything without God**—cf. Psa. 19:12-13; Josh. 9:14b; Luke 24:15.
2. To walk with God is to take Him as our center and everything, to live and do things according to God and with God, according to His revelation and leading, and to **do everything with Him**—Rom. 8:4, 13-14; Gal. 2:2a; 2 Cor. 5:14-15.
3. To walk with God means that **we do not live by what we are or can do** but by the immortal life, which is Christ Himself—vv. 4, 9.
4. To walk with God is to have **habitual fellowship** with God, to be in **constant touch** with the Lord, and to be under His **constant infusion**—1 John 1:3; Phil. 4:6; 2 Cor. 3:16, 18.
5. To walk with God is to **continually exercise our spirit** to enjoy the Blessed Trinity—Jude 14, 19-21.
6. To walk with God implies the **denying of our self** and everything that is of our self so that we may be one with Him; it implies that we have given ourselves to Him, that we will give in to Him and let Him take the lead—Matt. 16:24-25; 2 Cor. 2:13-14.

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

1. Faith means that **we believe that God is**—vv. 1-2, 6; 2 Cor. 4:13, 18:
 - a. Without faith it is impossible to please God, to make God happy—Heb. 11:6a.
 - b. To believe that God is, is to **believe that He is everything to us** and that **we are nothing**—John 8:58; Eccl. 1:2.
 - c. To believe that God is implies that **we are not**; He must be the only One, the unique One, in everything, and we must be nothing in everything—Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5.
 - d. To believe that God is, is to **deny our self**; in the whole universe He is, and all of us are nothing—Luke 9:23.
 - e. I should not be anything; I should not exist; only He should exist—**it is no longer I, but Christ**—Gal. 2:20.
 - f. At his conversion the Lord told Saul of Tarsus, “I am Jesus”—Acts 9:5:
 - (1) The Lord was saying, “I am the great I Am; I am the One who is; you must believe that I am and that you are not.”
 - (2) Eventually, Saul was over, and Paul came up—13:9.

- g. This is faith—"O the joy of **having nothing and being nothing**, seeing nothing but a living Christ in glory, and being careful for nothing but His interests down here"—J. N. Darby.
- 2. Faith means that we believe that **God is a rewarder** of **those who diligently seek Him**—Heb. 11:6; Gen. 15:1; Phil. 3:8, 14:
 - a. Enoch's reward was the highest degree of life—escape from death—Heb. 11:5a; 2 Cor. 5:4; Rom. 8:6, 10-11; 5:17.
 - b. The Lord is a rewarder, and **we need to be His seekers**—Psa. 27:4, 8; 42:1-2; 43:4; 73:25; 119:2, 10.
- C. Enoch, as the first person to be raptured, is the representative of all the overcomers who will be raptured while they are living—Matt. 24:37-51; Rev. 14:1; Luke 21:34-36:
 - 1. Our being raptured **depends on our being mature in the divine life** by our walking with God—Heb. 6:1a.
 - 2. Enoch **continually walked upward with God** day and night for three centuries, becoming closer to God and more one with God each day until "he was not, for God took him"—Gen. 5:24; cf. S. S. 8:5a.

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**. Our appearing before God starts in the morning. Have we ever come before Him and said, "Lord, here I am. I am not asking for anything, not even for a supply for the day. I am just here for You. I do not care about today; I just care about now. I do not care how needy I am. I just want to be here with You. I love You!"? This is the attitude of the firstfruits. The attitude of those who are among the firstfruits is, "Lord, we do not care even about our rapture; we just care about You!" Nevertheless, they are raptured.

We may start to contact the Lord in the morning, and it should become a **continuous conversation throughout the day**. We may say to Him, "Lord, I love You! Lord, I do not like what is coming. I have this responsibility to carry out. O Lord, I do not agree that You should have Your little servant doing this, but I am just following You." We should talk to Him about anything and everything. Surely, He likes this.

Philippians 4:6 says, "*In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*" According to footnote 4, the phrase to God "denotes motion **toward [God]**, in the sense of a living union and communion, implying fellowship. Hence, the sense of to God here is in the fellowship with God." If we are **making a request known to God**, it means that **we are getting closer to Him**. We are not making a call or sending an e-mail or a text but moving **toward His person**. Thus, the request is an excuse to have more contact. Many times, we may let our requests be made known, and then we are disappointed when He does not answer the way we think He should. (*The Ministry of the Word*, vol. 30, No. 2, chapter 45)

Day 5

Matt. 24:45-47 - Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Truly I say to you that he will set him over all his possessions.

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

- A. God has a household and a household administration, an economy, to **dispense Himself as food** to the members of His household for His expression—1 Tim. 1:4; 3:15; Eph. 2:19.
- B. God has set **faithful and prudent slaves** over His household as household administrators, stewards, channels of supply, to give His people food at the proper time—Matt. 24:45; 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:10; Phil. 1:25.
- C. *Give them food* refers to **ministering the word of God and Christ as the life supply** to the believers in the church; Christ as the life-giving Spirit is our food, embodied and realized in the word of life—John 6:57, 63, 68; Acts 5:20:
 - 1. In order to enjoy the Lord as our spiritual food so that we can feed others, **we must pray over and muse on His word**, tasting and enjoying it through careful considering—Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15; Ezek. 3:1-4.
 - 2. We must devote ourselves to **prayer and the ministry of the word**—Acts 6:4; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8; John 7:37-39; cf. Heb. 7:25; 8:2.

Day 6

Matt. 20:27-28 - And whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave; Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

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

- D. To say in our heart that our Master **delays is to love the present evil age** and not to love the Lord's appearing—Matt. 24:48; 2 Tim. 4:8, 10; cf. Acts 26:16:
 - 1. We must beware of **covetousness, not storing up treasure for ourselves** but being rich toward God—Luke 12:15-20; 2 Cor. 6:10; Eph. 3:8.
 - 2. "Remember Lot's wife" is a solemn warning to the world-loving believers—Luke 17:31-32; cf. Rom. 1:21, 25.
 - 3. **We must be watchful and beseeching** so that the day of the Lord's coming would not come upon us suddenly as a snare—Luke 21:34-36; cf. Matt. 2:3.
- E. To **beat** our fellow slaves is to **mistreat** our fellow believers—24:49a; 18:3-7; Acts 9:4:
 - 1. We must **not judge and condemn** our fellow believers but **be kind** to them, tender-hearted, forgiving them, even as God in Christ forgave us—Luke 6:37; Eph. 4:31-32.
 - 2. We must **not revile or criticize** our brothers but **consider them more excellent** than ourselves—1 Cor. 6:10; Phil. 2:2-3, 29:
 - a. To revile a brother is to **criticize or demean** him harshly with abusive language—cf. Luke 17:2.
 - b. Those who take in reviling words bear the same responsibility as those who speak reviling words; such words damage the Body.
 - c. God will **never** entrust authority to **those who by nature like to criticize others**.
 - 3. **We must not lord it over our fellow believers** but serve them as a slave to feed them with

the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit—1 Pet. 5:3; Matt. 20:25-28:

- a. For one to lord it over the saints means that he replaces the Lord in their lives by **making decisions for them or by telling them where to move**, thus, insulting the headship and lordship of Christ.
 - b. If we tell others where they should go **without encouraging them to pray**, seek the Lord's leading, and have the proper fellowship in the Body, this is a **great insult to the Lord!**
- F. To eat and drink with the **drunken** is to keep company with **worldly people**, who are drunk with worldly things—24:49b; cf. Eph. 5:18:
1. Because of their divine nature and holy standing, the believers should not be yoked together with the unbelievers; this should be applied to all intimate relationships between believers and unbelievers, not only to marriage and business—2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 15:33; cf. Prov. 13:20.
 2. We must **flee youthful lusts and pursue the all-inclusive Christ** with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart—2 Tim. 2:22.