

## Our Inheritance in Christ

**Note:** These pages are taken from chapter 9 of the book, *Running to Win*, by G. Harry Leafe.

### *The Inheritance of Christ*

Since we know that *our* inheritance is related to *Christ's* inheritance, let's look at His first.

Our Lord's rule is over all creation, i.e. "all things" (Heb. 2:8). Some of it is expressed temporally – as Israel's King. His rule is "over the house of Jacob" (Lk. 1:33); and "over the gentiles" (Rom. 15:12).

The temporal expression of the kingdom will be for "a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6); and He will reign "until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). Moving on from the temporal, His kingdom is said to be "forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

The Old Testament tells us a great deal about the temporal expression of the kingdom. It is related primarily to the literal promises to Abraham and his seed. Yet we know very little about the eternal kingdom.

### *The Inheritance of Believers*

One of the problems we face in dealing with our inheritance is that the Scriptures use very general terms to describe it. Even so, we can gain enough insight to be able to build a fairly clear picture of what it will be like. Some of the terms address the inheritance directly, while others, like crowns and the promises to the conquerors in Revelation 2 and 3, seem to particularize the inheritance for certain individuals. The more general expressions include:

*The earth.* "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

*Eternal life.* "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Matt. 19:29; cf. Mk. 10:17; Lk. 10:25; 18:18).

*The kingdom.* "Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (Matt. 25:34).

*An imperishable body.* "Now this is what I am saying, brothers and sisters: Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Cor. 15:50).

*Salvation.* "Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve those who will inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14).

*The promises.* "But we passionately want each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the fulfillment of your hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish,

but imitators of those who through faith and perseverance inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:11-12).

*A blessing.* “Finally, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, affectionate, compassionate, and humble. Do not return evil for evil or insult for insult, but instead bless others because you were called to inherit a blessing” (1 Pet. 3:8-9).

When we look at the matter of *rewards*, the first thing we learn is that they will be received in heaven: “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil things against you falsely on account of me. Rejoice and be glad because your reward is great in heaven” (Matt. 5:11-12; cf. Matt. 16:12; Rev. 22:12).

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors do the same, don't they?” (Matt. 5:46).

“For the Son of Man is will come with his angels in the glory of His Father, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done” (Matt. 16:27).

“The one who plants and the one who waters work as one, but each will receive his reward according to his work” (1 Cor. 3:8).

“If what someone has built survives, he will receive a reward” (1 Cor. 3:14).

“Watch out, so that you do not lose what we have worked for, but receive a full reward” (2 Jn. 8).

The matter of *crowns* gets a lot more personal. A crown is a *symbol* of victory, honor, or distinction. Therefore, to crown someone is to confer upon them honor, dignity, or reward.

We need to realize that what we are naturally as unbelievers, and what Satan tries to get us as believers to do now is to seek the honor of men. It is a part of this world system. People will do unbelievable things for a plaque to go on their wall, a trophy to put on their mantle, etc. Did not the Lord warn us about this kind of motivation: “Be careful not to display your righteousness merely to be seen by people. Otherwise you have no reward with your Father in heaven. Thus whenever you do charitable giving, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets so that people will praise them. I tell you the truth, they have their reward” (Matt. 6:1-2).

We need to think in eternal terms, not in temporal. That which is temporal will perish. Paul put it this way: “Do you not know that all the runners in a stadium compete, but only one receives the prize? So run to win. Each competitor must exercise self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one” (1 Cor. 9:24-25).

Crowns can also be forfeited: “Hold on to what you have so that no one can take away your crown” (Rev. 3:11).

There are four crowns that are mentioned:

(1) *Crown of righteousness*. “I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith! Finally the crown of righteousness is reserved for me. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will award it to me in that day – and not to me only, but also to all who have set their affections on his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

(2) *Crown of glory and honor*. “You crowned him [man] with glory and honor” (Heb. 2:7; cf. 2:9).

(3) *Crown of life*. “happy is the one who endures testing, because when he has proven to be genuine, he will receive the crown of life that God promised to those who love him” (Ja. 1:12; cf. Rev. 2:10).

(4) *Crown of glory*. “So as your fellow elder and witness of Christ's sufferings and as one who shares in the glory that will be revealed, I urge the elders among you: Give a shepherd's care to God's flock among you, exercising oversight not merely as a duty but willingly under God's direction, not for shameful profit but eagerly. And do not lord it over those entrusted to you, but be examples to the flock. Then when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that never fades away” (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

The final aspect regarding our inheritance has to do with the promises to the conquerors. In 1 John 5:3-5, we are told that the love of God is to “that we keep his commandments” (v. 3a); and then John adds that “his commandments do not weigh us down” (v. 3b). Our love for God manifests itself in obedience to His word (cf. Jn. 14:14, 21, 23-24). When we live in obedience to His word, we are conquering the world, the flesh and the devil; the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the sinful pride of life (cf. Rom 12:2; Gal. 5:16-17; Ja. 4:7; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

For the sum of these, John uses the term “world,” and he anticipates that all believers will, to some extent, be conquerors (v. 4a). Indeed, because of faith in Christ as our Savior, we have “conquered” and are the only ones who can keep on conquering: “Now who is the person who has conquered the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (v. 5).

When John came to write the Book of Revelation, The Lord Jesus Christ gave him promises to communicate to those who are conquerors. Relating this to our earlier study, all believers are conquerors in the sense of being saved from the penalty of sin. However, not all believers continue on as faithful conquerors!

To borrow an earlier illustration, when the nation of Israel left Egypt, it pictured our redemption in Christ. Their looking to their inheritance which God had set before them pictures our looking to our inheritance in Christ that is reserved in heaven for us. In essence, God told them, “Your inheritance (the land) is set before you – it is yours, but you must possess it. You must conquer those who are in the land. Do not intermarry with

the them, do not make agreements with them – drive them out of the land and possess it. I have given you all the resources you need, and I will fight your battles for you.”

Ironically, they never totally possessed the land. Why? Because of disobedience and unbelief. They forfeited what could have been theirs! And we can do the same thing. We forfeit aspects of our promised inheritance if we fail to be faithful conquerors.

### *The Promises to Conquerors*

“To the one who conquers, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). What Adam lost we gain in Christ: “This is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the bread your ancestors ate, but then later died. The one who eats this bread will live forever” (Jn. 6:58).

“The one who conquers will in no way be harmed by the second death” (Rev. 2:11). Jesus said, “the one who lives and believes in me will never die” (Jn. 11:26).

“To the one who conquers, I will give him some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and on that stone will be written a name that no one can understand except the one who receives it” (Rev. 2:17). This promise stresses the fact that there will be different levels of relationship with the Lord in heaven. Like John 14:21, it stresses intimacy and familiarity: “The person who has My commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will reveal myself to him.”

“The one who conquers and who continues in my deeds until the end, I will give him authority over the nations – he will rule them with an iron rod and like clay jars he will break them to pieces, just as I have received the right to rule from my Father – and I will give him the morning star” (Rev. 2:26-28). This involves reigning with Christ.

“The one who conquers will be dressed like them in white clothing, and I will never erase his name from the book of life, but will declare his name before my Father and before his angels” (Rev. 3:5). The theme of white garments is used in two ways: (1) to refer to our positional righteousness (Rev. 7:14); and (2) to our works of righteousness (Rev. 19:8). The second half of the statement is an affirmation of what our Lord said in John 10:27-28, “My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; no one will snatch them from my hand.”

In the context of Matthew 10, our Lord is taught His disciples about persecution and their active identification with Him. In verses 32 and 33 He said, “Whoever, then, acknowledges me before people, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever denies me before people, I will deny him before my Father in heaven.” He ends the discourse by relating it to the possible loss of rewards (vv.40-42).

“The one who conquers I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never depart from it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God (the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from my God), and my new name as well” (Rev. 3:12). This has to do with priestly privilege (cf. Zech. 3:1-10) and also stresses our identification with God. Every conqueror is both *with* God and *identified* with God.

“I will grant the one who conquers permission to sit with me on my throne, just as I too conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev. 3:21). Those who overcome will reign with Christ in power and authority. This is not for every believer. Paul writes to Timothy that “If we endure, we will reign with Him” (2 Tim. 2:12a).

We certainly have not exhausted all that could be said about our inheritance. It is a vitally important subject, yet one sadly neglected. As we approach the coming of our Savior, the Spirit of God is moving to make these truths more widely known – and you can help! Spread the word! Share this book with your friends and loved ones. The time to spread the greatness of this message is now!

Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, His last words recorded by John in the Book of Revelation:

“Look! I am coming soon, and my reward is with me to pay each one according to what he has done!” (Rev. 22:12).