

Your Kingdom Come! - 9

As we saw earlier, the millennium will end with all of humanity having been made immortal, and this was prefigured under the Law of Moses as the final harvest of the agricultural year. Also included in the foreshadowing elements of that law was the bringing in of the firstfruits of that harvest.

The very first man to be made immortal was Jesus - to be joined later by his brethren. But Christ was the first of the ripe fruit of the life-harvest which God proposes to raise for His own glory in the earth - "each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" - 1 Corinthians 15:23.

The foreshadowing is in Leviticus 23:10–20, in the presentation of a sheaf of the earliest yield of ripened grain, fulfilled when the immortal Jesus ascended to the Father. The rest of the harvest must follow in the same process of raising. Jesus attained to immortal life by faith and obedience

- "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name" - Philippians 2:8.

- "In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, 8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" - Hebrews 5:7.

Those who are his disciples, their sins forgiven, pass through the same process to attain immortality. It is not possible for them to enjoy their reward immediately. Physically they die like all others. But the difference from the others - who have not "repented and believed in the gospel" - Mark 1:15, is that their death, like that of Jesus, is only temporary.

This delay in receiving their immortality is necessary to allow the development of believers' faith - which is confidence in the promise of God. Consider that if, the moment a man believed in the gospel, he was guaranteed to never die while he awaited the coming of Christ and to be made immortal - in those conditions there would be no necessity for faith, placing his hope in what God has promised - people would become believers, not because of what God had promised, but because they could see an actual present advantage in believing.

This is why it is necessary for the exercise of faith that there should be no present obvious and physical difference between those who serve God and those who do not. For the believer to demonstrate his confidence in God, this difference must only be physically obvious when the faithful receive their reward, when it will be possible to "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him" - Malachi 3:18.

This now leaves the mortal nations who are Christ's subjects in his kingdom. The same necessity for faith applies to these - "Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham...8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed'. 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham" - Galatians 3:7.