

How Will Christ Deliver the Kingdom to the Father?

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In Paul's first letter to the Church in Corinth -- in chapter 15 of that letter -- he makes a statement that, for us today, is sometimes kind of a head-scratcher in trying to completely understand exactly how we should interpret and apply this particular statement. And the statement I'm referring to is Paul makes the comment that in the end Christ is going to "deliver the Kingdom to the Father". Now, again, this can be a little bit puzzling because the Father, He's the "God" in the phrase, "Kingdom of God". *It's His kingdom.* And Christ makes it very clear throughout the Bible that the Father is superior to Him. He says His Father is greater than Him. He refers to the Father as "His God". And He's the servant of the Father. He's always in a subordinate position to the Father.

So, how exactly are we to understand the comment that Christ is going to deliver the Kingdom to the Father? Well, today in the sermon, we're going to take a look at this particular statement and dig into the details here to see how exactly we should understand this particular statement. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

How Will Christ Deliver the Kingdom to the Father?

So, to start off with, let's turn over to 1 Corinthians 15, and look at this particular statement. The statement is in verse 24, but we're going to start in verse 22 just to get a little bit of the context initially here.

1 Cor 15:22 *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23) But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 24) Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25) For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet."* (NKJV)

Now, as I mentioned in the introduction, this statement can be a little bit of a head-scratcher for us because everything is subordinate to the Father. It's the Father's Kingdom. So, how exactly do we understand this?

Well, first of all, I'd like to address an interpretation of this verse that I was taught growing up in the Church of God. This interpretation was based upon a doctrine that was oftentimes referred to as "the God of the Old Testament". Now, what this particular doctrine referred to was the idea that -- particularly in reading the Old Testament -- when you see an account that describes a God being interacting directly with humans -- speaking to them or appearing to them, and such. Well, the assumption was that it always has to be Jesus Christ because it can't be God the Father. And part of the logic that was behind this particular doctrine was a false concept. It was the idea that the Father can't be in the presence of sin. So, as a result, He can't be directly involved with carnal, sinful human beings.

Well, based upon that logic, they would interpret this particular statement here in 1 Corinthians 15 to say that Christ has to be the one hands-on doing everything all the way up until the plan of salvation with mankind is completely concluded. And then there's no more sin and sinful human beings. All those who rebelled are no longer in existence, and Satan and his demons are destroyed. Well, now the Father can be directly involved, and this is when Christ delivers the Kingdom to Him. That was basically, in a nutshell, the interpretation that they had of this particular statement.

Now, as I mentioned just a moment ago, one of the fundamental concepts that was behind this particular belief was the idea that God the Father can't be directly in the presence of sin. Now, if we take a look at this concept through various Biblical examples, we can quickly see that this idea falls apart very quickly. It's very easy to debunk. And just to demonstrate that, turn over to the book of Job. We'll start here in Job 1, because we're going to see here a couple of examples where Satan himself is right before the throne of God the Father. And they're directly interacting and having a conversation with each other.

Now I think everyone would easily agree with the fact that the worst sinner in existence – that has to be Satan the devil. I think most everyone would easily agree with that -- that he's the worst sinner there ever has been. Well, if the worst sinner in existence can be standing right before God the Father's throne and directly interacting and having a conversation with Him, well, obviously the Father can be in the presence of sin. But just to notice some examples of this, start here in Job 1:6.

Job 1:6 *“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. 7) And the LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” So Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” 8) Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” 9) So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? 10) Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11) But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” 12) And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.” (NKJV)*

Now, if you jump over to chapter 2, we'll see another very similar exchange here. Once again, we have Satan the devil -- the worst sinner in history and in existence -- and he's directly before the throne of God the Father, having an interactive conversation with Him. This is Job 2:1.

Job 2:1 *“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present*

himself before the LORD. 2) And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it." 3) Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause." 4) So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. 5) But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" 6) And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life." 7) So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." (NKJV)

So, you can see here, we just read a couple of examples of Satan directly before the throne of the Father. Directly having conversations with Him. Well, there's a similar account in the book of Revelation. If you turn over to Revelation 12, we'll start reading in verse 7.

Revelation 12:7 *"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8) but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9) So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10) Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down." (NKJV)*

Noticed it referred to "our God" and "His Christ." So, both the Father and Christ are referenced here. And it's talking about Satan being before the throne of "our God", which is clearly the Father, as opposed to Christ. So, very clearly, we can see the worst sinner in existence can be right directly before the Father's throne, directly interacting with Him. So, this idea that the Father can't be in the presence of sin is clearly just a false, misguided concept.

But on this note, let's also consider the fact that the Father, through His Spirit, can dwell directly inside carnal, physical human beings. If you turn over to 1 Corinthians 3, we'll see here that it refers to converted Christians who've received the Holy Spirit as the "temple of God". And the reason it's using the analogy of a temple is because if you think about it in the context of Old Covenant Israel, they had a literal physical temple. Initially, it was a tabernacle and then later, an elaborate building of a temple. But it had a Most Holy Place there. And this is where the presence of the Father dwelt. And that's where they would come to sacrifice and to worship Him. And clearly, this was the Father who dwelt there, because how did Christ refer to the temple? As "My Father's house". It was the house where His Father's presence dwelt. And notice what Paul's going to tell us here in 1 Corinthians 3, beginning in verse 16.

1 Cor 3:16 *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17) If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”* (NKJV)

What he's saying is that the Father's presence dwells directly inside you. Now, again, this is converted Christians who've had their sins forgiven by the sacrifice of Christ. But still, we would all admit that even though we've been baptized and had our sins forgiven and committed to a life of obedience, we still sin. We still regularly make mistakes. We're still carnal human beings who have to struggle with our human nature. And yet the Father can still dwell inside us and be actively involved with us.

And we'll see this comment a couple more times here. Turn over to John 14. We'll see a comment here where Christ explains to the Apostles that once they're converted -- they receive the Holy Spirit -- the Father and He (Christ) are going to dwell inside them. That their presence will actually be inside converted human beings. This is John 14:22.

John 14:22 *“Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” 23) Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. 24) He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.”* (NKJV)

He says that both of Them will “make their home with him”. In other words, they'll dwell inside individuals who are converted and who have received the Holy Spirit. And we'll see this even more clearly stated over in Romans 8. We'll start reading in verse 9.

Rom 8:9 *“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10) And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11) But if the Spirit of Him 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 dwells in you.”* (NKJV)

Now, the God “who raised Christ from the dead”, that's clearly the Father. So, he's referring to the Father dwelling inside us. So, we can see the Father can not only be in the presence of sin, He can be actively involved with His creation and with sinful human beings. And that's always been the case. He has always been hands-on involved with His creation.

And He will be very actively involved in what you might call “end-time events”. Through the Day of the LORD and the resurrection and all that takes place after that. He's not a bystander just sitting back at a distance watching while Christ handles everything and He just stays out of the picture. That's not the picture that the Bible paints for us. And to see that, turn over to Revelation 11. We're going to pick up here in verse 15.

Now, what we're about to read here is basically the blowing of the seventh trumpet. You are probably familiar with the fact that the Day of the LORD is comprised of seven trumpets. Most of these are plagues that play out with the wrath of God upon mankind. But first of all, just think about the term "Day of the LORD". Now, that's a term we typically find in the Old Testament, but notice that when it says "Day of the LORD", LORD is in all caps. Because in Hebrew it's "Yehovah". That's the name of the Father. It's the day of His wrath. So, He's very actively involved in this.

And notice here when the seventh trumpet is blown, and it talks about the transfer of the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our God. Notice who's being referred to here. It's the Father. Pick up in verse 15 here.

Rev 11:15 *"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*" (NKJV)

Notice it's "our Lord" and "His Christ". So, "our Lord" has to be the Father. Now pick up in verse 16.

"16) And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17) saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come,..." (NKJV)

Now we're going to see here in just a moment in Revelation 1, we can conclusively prove that this title "who is and who was and who is to come" that's an exclusive title of the Father. Now, continue reading here.

"...Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. 18) The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth." (NKJV)

Now, notice who's taking the reins of control, and who's rewarding His servants? It's the Father. And notice that the timing here is the blowing of the seventh trumpet. Well, what else do we always associate with the blowing of the seventh trumpet? Well, we know from 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4 that's when the resurrection takes place. That's when the Firstfruits receive their reward, and they receive the resurrection to eternal life. Notice that the Father is very actively involved here through the whole process. He's not sitting back watching, totally hands off, and can't be involved because His creation has sin cooties and He can't be involved with it. That's not the picture that it's painting it all. He's very hands-on involved in the whole process.

Now, I mentioned just a moment ago, as I was reading through this, when verse 17 refers to "the one who is and who was and who is to come", that is a title specific to the Father. Now, just to take a moment just to nail that down, turn over to Revelation 1. And

we'll see very clearly, it's going to differentiate who this title has to refer to. So, we just can't get confused. It's Revelation 1:4.

Rev 1:4 *“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5) and from Jesus Christ, ...”* (NKJV)

Notice that “who is and who was and who is to come” is somebody different than Christ. It has to be the Father. And just to continue the verse here.

“...the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6) and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (NKJV)

So, you see, it goes on with a further description of Christ and His role. What I want you to see here is “He who is and who was and who is to come”, that's exclusively the Father. But what I want you to see in the whole bigger picture here is this idea that Christ delivers the Kingdom to the Father because the Father has just been kind of off on the sidelines. Just watching at a distance, and He's not involved in any of the process. And now Christ is finally giving the Kingdom to Him so He can be involved. That's obviously a very flawed interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:24. That's obviously not what that's referring to.

So, now let's ask the question: what is Paul really trying to say there? What concept is he trying to get across to us, and what does he mean by Christ “delivering the Kingdom to the Father”? To understand that we need to understand the context in which Paul makes this statement. So, let's turn back over to 1 Corinthians 15.

What we're going to do this time is pick up in verse 12. Because what I want you to see here is the whole context and focus of this chapter. That helps us interpret exactly what Paul's trying to say here. Because this chapter is oftentimes referred to as a “resurrection chapter”. And the reason being is that the entire focus of this chapter is the resurrection to eternal life. When those who've been offered salvation and successfully endured to the end and made it into the Kingdom of God, when they receive their change and are resurrected to eternal life. That is the whole subject and the whole focus of what's being addressed in this chapter. And that's very important to realize when we look at how to understand this statement in verse 24. But let's start reading now in verse 12.

1 Cor 15:12 *“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14) And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15) Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise.*

16) For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17) And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18) Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19) If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. 20) But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21) For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23) But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming." (NKJV)

Notice all the verses that lead up to verse 24. The whole focus here is the resurrection to eternal life. That's the entire context in which Paul's going to make the statements that he does in verse 24. Picking up in verse 24.

"24) Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power." (NKJV)

You see, what we need to understand is not only the phrase "Kingdom of God," but specifically in the exact context that he's mentioning it. Because a little bit later in this chapter, Paul makes it very clear that when the Firstfruits are resurrected we inherit the Kingdom of God. In other words, we become a part of the Kingdom of God at the resurrection -- the whole subject this entire chapter is focusing on. And to see that, turn over to verse 50 of 1 Corinthians 15. Let's pick up here in verse 50.

1 Cor 15:50 *"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51) Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54) So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (NKJV)*

Now, notice here, he's saying that at the resurrection we inherit the Kingdom of God. We're not going to look at all the scriptures associated with this today, but you'll see this mentioned a number of times throughout the Bible. You'll see the phrases you "inherit the Kingdom of God" and "enter the Kingdom of God". The concept it's getting at is that we become part of the Kingdom of God when we're changed to spirit at the resurrection to eternal life. And to notice this, again, turn over to Matthew 25, because we'll see here that this concept doesn't just apply to the Firstfruits. It also applies to the rest of mankind. All those who are called after Christ's return when they're given their opportunity for salvation. Those who successfully endure to the end and receive the resurrection to eternal life, they "inherit the Kingdom of God" as well. So, the exact same concepts apply here as well. So, let's pick up here in Matthew 25:31.

Matt 25:31 *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32) All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33) And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34) Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”* (NKJV)

Notice we have this same language here, "inheriting the Kingdom". And when does that happen? Just jump down to verse 46 here.

Matt 25:46 *“And these will go away into everlasting punishment...”* (NKJV)

Now He's referring there to the goats, those who are going in the lake of fire. We skipped over that section. But just finish the rest of the sentence here.

“...but the righteous into eternal life.” (NKJV)

In other words, they're going to “inherit the Kingdom” at the resurrection to eternal life. It's the exact same concept that we see with the Firstfruits. So, see, if we look at it from this specific context, now we can define what Paul's referring to as the “Kingdom of God”. He talks about “delivering the Kingdom”. See, if we wanted to define the “Kingdom” there, it's really the family of God beings. Because the Father, He's the “God” of the Kingdom of God. He's always the one in charge, and who's actively running everything. But the “Kingdom”, by this definition, is the Father, and it's Christ, and it's all the others who inherit the Kingdom of God, who enter and become a part of the Kingdom of God. So, if you want to define the Kingdom, it's all of the family of God beings. That is who's being referred to here.

And just to kind of further clarify this concept, turn over to Luke 17. Because we'll see an example here where Christ has a conversation where He refers to Himself as part of the Kingdom of God. And to notice this, let's look in Luke 17:20.

Luke 17:20 *“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21) nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.’”* (NKJV)

Now, the way it's worded here in the New King James oftentimes leads people to come to some false conclusions, and they go down false roads with this. Because people oftentimes can make the assumption, well, it's “within you”. Well, He must be saying that converted human beings -- once you have the Spirit of God in you -- well, now you're part of the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom is in your heart. Now, all you have to do is think about the context and the timing of this statement to realize that that is a flawed interpretation of this.

Because think about when this is being said here. Christ isn't talking to an audience who has already received the Holy Spirit and telling them that because you have the Spirit, the Kingdom of God is within you. Christ hasn't died yet to pay for the sins of mankind. And the Holy Spirit has not been poured out yet. Even the Apostles themselves don't even receive the Holy Spirit until Acts 2, on the Day of Pentecost. So, obviously, He's not telling the audience that the Holy Spirit is in you so you're part of the Kingdom of God. Because He's not talking to an audience that has the Holy Spirit. That can't be what He's referring to.

Now, in my New King James, right where it says "within you", there's a little "1" next to it. If you look in the margin, it says "in your midst". In fact, some Bible translations -- for example, the New American Standard Bible -- they translate the latter part of verse 21 there as "the kingdom of God is in your midst". In other words, it's in your presence. You're near it. Christ is referring to Himself. He's referring to Himself as a member of the Kingdom of God. And to see that, let's just read the next three verses here. Because it's very obvious what He's referring to if we continue on. He's referring to Himself.

"22) Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23) And they will say to you, "Look here!" or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them. 24) For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day." (NKJV)

So, He's referring to the "Son of Man". Well, that's a title for Himself. That's a title of Christ. So, when He says the Kingdom of God is "within you" or more correctly "in your midst", He's obviously referring to Himself.

Now again, let me clarify one other detail here. Because we read previously in 1 Corinthians 15 that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God". Let's also keep in mind that while Christ is flesh and blood at the time He's saying this, He's an eternal God-being who came to earth and was born as a human. Now, if you study the subject throughout the Bible you'll notice -- particularly through the Gospel accounts while Christ is a physical human being walking the earth -- He allows other human beings to bow down and to worship Him. And He never corrects them for this.

You will never see anyone else doing this. There are accounts where people are seeing the Apostles who are already converted at this point. Actually, an example is in the book of Acts where they're performing miracles, and such, and people are wowed by it. And they're wanting to bow down to them. And they quickly correct the individuals and say, "No, that's totally inappropriate. You don't bow down and worship me." You'll see examples in the Bible where righteous angels interact with human beings. And human beings want to bow down and worship them. And the angel corrects them and says, "No, that's totally inappropriate. You only worship God. You cannot worship me."

So, Christ was in a unique situation here that even though He's flesh and blood at the time He's making this statement, remember, He's a God-being who's eternal, who came

down from heaven and was born as a physical human being. And again, He's still maintaining His status as having been part of the God family before He comes to earth. So, that's why He can refer to Himself as part of the Kingdom of God, even though He's in physical form at the time that this is taking place.

But now, if we understand the term "Kingdom of God" in this context, that's the Father, the Son, and then all those who inherit the Kingdom of God at the resurrection. Then look at it from that point of view and realize that 1 Corinthians 15, what's the whole focus of what's being discussed there? The primary focus of the whole chapter is the resurrection to eternal life. This is the point where all the physical human beings who are offered salvation -- if they successfully endure to the end -- inherit or enter the Kingdom of God. They now become a part of this Kingdom. Well, see, now if we understand it from that standpoint and understand the logistics that play out not only with the Firstfruits, but even with the rest of mankind -- as we're going to see here later in this sermon -- we can see examples of exactly how Christ will "deliver the Kingdom". All these newly formed God beings who are now part of the Kingdom. How he delivers them to the Father. And to see this, turn over to 1 Thessalonians 4. We'll start reading here in verse 15.

1 Thess 4:15 *"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18) Therefore comfort one another with these words."* (NKJV)

Now, notice here, at the resurrection, Christ is coming down in the clouds to earth. He's basically collecting up all these newly minted God beings who've now inherited the Kingdom of God. He's collecting them together. But now let's turn over to Revelation 14 and see where they go next, because Christ delivers them to the Father. We'll start reading in verse 1.

Rev 14:1 *"Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. 2) And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. 3) They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. 4) These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb."* (NKJV)

Notice this is the Firstfruits that are pictured here.

“5) And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.” (NKJV)

So, notice what happened here. At the resurrection to eternal life, all these former human beings now inherit the Kingdom of God. They're now part of the Kingdom. And what logistically played out? Christ collected them, and He delivered them to the Father. *This is what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 14:24.* This is how this logistically plays out.

But now what we're about to see is this doesn't just play out this way with the Firstfruits. This also plays out in a very similar manner with the rest of mankind. Because notice we read previously in Matthew 25 -- basically the judgment scene that's played out there where Christ is separating the sheep from the goats. Those who make it into the Kingdom of God and those who wind up going into the lake of fire because of their rebellion. Well, what does it tell us? They “inherit the Kingdom of God” as well at the resurrection to eternal life.

Now, if we continue reading here in the rest of chapter 14, we'll see here described basically the time of judgment for the rest of mankind. Those who are called after Christ's return. And we're going to see here a description very similar, where Christ is the one involved in actively harvesting them. I mean, just kind of use the farming analogy that a harvest is based upon. If all the human beings are the crop, well, Christ is the one actually being the farmer. The one who's collecting the crop together. But then we're going to see, again, He's going to deliver the crop to the Father.

Now, as we're going through the latter part of chapter 14, it's going to take a little bit of time to go through this. Because the symbolic language here oftentimes kind of trips people up, and they misapply and don't really understand what the rest of this chapter is referring to here. Now, we're going to see that the latter part of this is going to give us a very clear reference to Christ harvesting the rest of mankind on the earth. But again, to get all the timing and everything basically clarified so we don't get tripped up by some of the symbolic language and misapply it all, we're going to have to take a little time unpacking some details here.

Now, again, I won't go into all of this in great detail here. If you want to study this subject in even more detail, there's a study paper on my website. If you're watching this on YouTube, there's a link right below this video you can just click on, and it will take you straight to my website. The title of the study paper is “The 144,000 and The Great Multitude”. And what you'll see explained in that paper is that not only Revelation 14, but Revelation 7, both of these chapters are basically addressing the same concepts. And they both have the same overall format.

And what I mean by that is the first section of both of these chapters are dedicated to addressing the Firstfruits. In other words, all those individuals who are called to their opportunity for salvation from the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, all the way up to the return of Christ. Everyone who's offered salvation during that timeframe and successfully endures to the end and makes it into the Kingdom of God. That's

who's being addressed in the first half of both of these chapters is that group. Well, the rest of mankind, all those who are then called after Christ's return and offered their chance at salvation, that's who's being addressed in the latter part of both of these chapters. That's who Revelation 7 refers to as the "great multitude".

And again, I won't unpack all of the details associated with this in this sermon today. If you're interested in that, you can look at that study paper, because it goes into a lot more detail. But again, these directly correlate with each other. But just to see this, let's start reading here in verse 6. And what I want you to notice in these first couple of verses here is, again, we're referring to all of the rest of mankind as in contrast with the Firstfruits. And it's their time of judgment. This is starting in verse 6 here.

Rev 14:6 *"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—"* (NKJV)

If you compare this with how the great multitude is described in Revelation 7, you'll see very similar language of "every tribe, nation, tongue, and people". It's phrased very similarly. You'll see very clearly the same idea getting across. The contrast is kind of easier to see in Revelation 7. And what I mean by that is you'll see the Firstfruits very clearly being pictured at the beginning of that chapter as spiritual Israel. In other words, they're basically a spiritual nation, and that nation is Israel. Well, then, the contrast to that is every other nation -- all of the rest of mankind. That's the concept that's being addressed there. But now notice verse 7.

"7) saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." (NKJV)

Notice it's saying this is your time of judgment. Now, notice as we read through the rest of this, there's a lot of symbolic language. But if you just kind of notice the general picture that's being painted throughout the rest of this chapter, you're going to see two alternatives. You're going to see basically the warning here, fear God and obey Him. And we're going to see -- as we go a little bit further here -- the warning against not being deceived by false religion and accepting the mark of the beast and following Satan's way. You're going to see these two ways opposed with each other.

But notice, as it talks about this in terms of judgment. It's referring to people's salvation being judged. Because we're going to see those who rebel wind up getting not just physical punishment, physical death. They wind up in the lake of fire. And we're going to see those who are righteous and follow God's path, they're going to wind up receiving salvation. So, again, we're in a context here where people's salvation is being judged. Now, let's pick up here in verse 8.

“8) And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” (NKJV)

Now again, this particular verse is oftentimes a stumbling block for people and for interpreting the second half of this chapter. Because they see this statement “is fallen, is fallen”, and they're thinking, well, this must be the end time and Babylon has been destroyed, and it's gone. Well, as we're going to see here, that concept is not going to work when we read the verses that follow after this because it's a warning for people not to follow this system called Babylon. Well, if something is destroyed and it is no more, you wouldn't be warning people of the consequences of following something that's gone, that doesn't exist anymore. So, obviously that's not what this is referring to here.

Well, the key here is understanding the Greek word that this translated as “fallen” here, where it says, “is fallen, is fallen.” Now the Greek word here is transliterated into English as “pipto”. It's Strong's # 4098. And the definition I'm going to read to you comes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zohiates. He defines it as:

“Metaphorically of persons, meaning to fall into or under;...under, meaning under condemnation....Used in an absolute sense, to fall into sin, transgress, to sin...”

See, when it's saying, “is fallen, is fallen,” it's saying it's under judgment. It's condemned because it leads people into sin. That is the concept it's getting at here. It's not saying it's destroyed, and it is no more. And again, that'll be obvious when we read the next several verses. Because, again, you wouldn't warn people not to be tripped up and follow a system that's already defunct and is not in existence anymore.

And to get a little clearer idea of what is referred to in the Bible as “Babylon” -- keep your finger here in chapter 14 because we're coming right back -- but turn over to Revelation 17. I'm going to show you how the Bible uses the term “Babylon” here to get a clearer idea of what we're really getting at. Because what we're talking about is kind of a broad term here that's basically referring to idolatrous false religion that leads people astray and away from God. And pick up here in verse 4 of Revelation 17.

Rev 17:4 *“The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. 5) And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6) I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.” (NKJV)*

Now, the specific context of this chapter is referring to the beast empires throughout time. It refers to it as having seven heads. And it refers to this woman that's riding the beast as “Mystery Babylon”. It's this harlot. That's what's being described here.

Now, let me also just briefly address a common misunderstanding of this chapter. Because a concept I was taught a lot of my life growing up was they would interpret this chapter as specifically just the Catholic Church, and the break-off groups that broke off over time from the Catholic Church. And that's how this was interpreted, very narrowly. I won't take the time to go through the rest of the chapter. But if you read through the rest of chapter 17, what you'll see here is the angel says to the Apostle John -- he talks about all seven heads of this beast. And he says, five have fallen, one is current, and one's in the future -- one's not yet. If you're the Apostle John, how would you interpret that statement? Well, five are prior to John's time. One is obviously the Roman Empire that John's dealing with in his lifetime, and there's another one coming later.

I won't get into all the details of that. If you're interested in studying that subject, on my website there's a study paper called "The Beast of Revelation" that'll go into all of this in great detail. But what I want you to grasp at this point is if this false religious system has ridden all of these empires and five of them were prior to the Roman Empire when John's having this conversation, well, there wasn't even a Catholic Church when John's having this conversation, let alone the prior five empires that have to be prior to this conversation. Now, all of those empires had various false religious systems that were thrust upon the Israelites and were used to lead people astray. That was true of all of them, but it wasn't just specific to Catholicism. That doesn't fit the context here at all. It's basically a much broader term referring to idolatrous false religion.

Because if you kind of study this in the Old Testament, you'll see lots of references where idolatry and harlotry and spiritual adultery and such are all tied to this concept of false worship and following false gods. And again, this is long before there ever was a Catholic Church. But what I want you to see here is the reference to "Babylon" here is again more of a generic reference to false religion that leads people away from the true God and leads them into rebellion.

And with that in mind, turn back over to chapter 14. Because we're going to pick up now in verse 9. And as I mentioned before, it's obvious when you read the next couple of verses here, because it's a warning not to get tripped up and follow this false religious system. Well, again, that makes it clear to us that the comment that Babylon "is fallen", it's not referring to it being out of existence. Because you don't warn people not to follow a system that's defunct and no longer exists. That doesn't logically make sense. We pick up now in verse 9.

Rev 14:9 *"Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10) he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11) And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." (NKJV)*

Now, first of all, let's just notice the fact here that the punishment for those who receive the mark of the beast -- this isn't physical pain. This isn't just physical death. This is being cast into the lake of fire. This has to be in a context where their salvation is at stake here. We're not talking about prior to Christ's return, where there are lots of people following the beast empires, but they were deceived. They didn't really know what they were doing. And yes, they were in rebellion against God, but they didn't lose their salvation because they weren't offered salvation yet. That's obviously not what we're talking about here because these individuals are going to wind up thrown in the lake of fire.

Well, the key here is understanding that the mark of the beast is not just an end-time reference. Because oftentimes people get tripped up over that concept. Now, I'm just going to summarize this particular subject. There are study papers and even sermons on my website that'll go into the mark of the beast in much more detail. But what you'll see in the sermon and the study papers is there are references to the hand and the forehead that we always associate with the mark of the beast. Well, that same imagery is used with God's law, and with God's Holy Days, and with just following his way of life. Having His law on your right hand and on your forehead. It's your thoughts and your actions is what it's referring to. It's a contrast between following God and following Satan's way of life. And just to quickly see that, keep your hand here in Revelation 14, but just turn over to Revelation 20. I'm going to read verse 4.

Rev 20:4 *“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”* (NKJV)

Now we know the group that lives and reigns with Christ for a thousand years, that's the resurrected Firstfruits. Notice that the entire group is referred to as those who refuse to receive the mark of the beast. Now if the mark of the beast was just an end-time concept, that comment wouldn't make any sense because only a small portion of them would be someone who had lived at the very end time just right before Christ's return. This is describing the whole group from righteous Abel all the way up to the return of Christ. And all of them as being those who refused to receive the mark of the beast.

That's because the mark of the beast is a symbolic reference to basically following Satan's way of life. Having your thoughts and your actions being in line with Satan's way of life, rather than having God's law on your right hand and on your forehead -- your thoughts and your actions. That's what this is really referring to here.

But now turn back over to Revelation 14 so we can see here the reference to not receiving the mark of the beast. It's a warning that if you're tripped up by this false religious system, you can lose your salvation. Well, keep in mind when the rest of mankind receives their chance at salvation. When does that occur? Well, Christ directly announced it in John 7. "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and he'll receive

rivers of living water." It directly tells you there in verse 39 that He's referring to giving the Holy Spirit to all those who are willing to receive it. Well, that's the Eighth Day. That's the Eighth Day time period. What also happens during the Eighth Day time period? Well, that's after the Millennium. What does Revelation 20 tell us? That's when Satan is released. So, see, Satan's back available to deceive people. So, it's still very possible to be deceived by his influence and led astray. That's the warning that's taking place here.

But notice, as I mentioned when we started through this whole section, you see a contrast here. And again, it's in terms of salvation, not just in terms of your physical life. Those who follow God and receive eternal life and those who rebel and wind up in the lake of fire. Well, we've just seen the warning to those who receive the mark of the beast. Those who get tripped up by Satan's false religious system. They're going to go in the lake of fire. Well, notice here as it picks up in verse 12, now we're talking about the righteous. Those who are going to make it in the Kingdom.

Rev 14:12 *"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."* (NKJV)

Those who made the right choice and who are following God.

"13) Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."" (NKJV)

Now notice here in the next three verses we're going to see a depiction now of those who are righteous being harvested by Christ. This is the resurrection to eternal life. Because that's when your final judgment is, and you inherit the Kingdom of God. It's the same picture we saw with the Firstfruits. Now pick up here in verse 14.

"14) Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man,..." (NKJV)

Very obvious reference to Christ.

"...having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. 15) And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.' 16) So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped." (NKJV)

Now notice here, this is Christ. And He's once again the one who's collecting the righteous who have followed God. This is a very similar picture to what we saw with the Firstfruits. But now, just to finish the context here, let's notice verse 17. This is a similar harvest that's happening at the same time. But this is a separate harvest.

And notice that this group receives the wrath of God. And also notice here that the second group is the only one who receives the wrath of God. It doesn't say anything about the group that Christ just harvested receiving the wrath of God, because that was the righteous. Those are the ones going into eternal life. It's the second group here that are going to receive the wrath of God. They're going to receive the lake of fire. But now notice here in verse 17.

"17) Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18) And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." 19) So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God." (NKJV)

Now this group is receiving the wrath of God, not the group that Christ harvested.

"20) And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs." (NKJV)

So, you can see here, there was a lot to unpack in the latter part of chapter 14 because of all the symbolic language. But what do we have? We have described here the time of God's judgment has come. This is the judgment of the rest of mankind. We have two groups described here. We have the righteous who make it into eternal life. We have the evil, the rebellious, who wind up receiving the mark of the beast. And again, they don't just get physical punishment in the end time. They wind up going into the lake of fire. This is obviously at a time when they're being offered salvation. So, what we have here is, this is addressing the judgment of the rest of mankind. That is what's being talked about here. It's just a little harder to decipher because of all the symbolic language.

But as I mentioned, Revelation 14 and Revelation 7 are basically direct parallels of each other. So, turn over to Revelation 7, and we'll see here where the great multitude is talked about. And notice that this also kind of finishes the picture for us. Because notice when we discussed the Firstfruits, we saw in 1 Thessalonians 4, Christ comes and collects them. He meets everyone in the air who receives the resurrection to eternal life. What does He do then? He then takes them to the Father's throne. Because we saw in Revelation 14, they're all standing before the Father's throne in heaven.

Now, we're going to see a similar thing here. Because as we unpacked the latter part of chapter 14 of Revelation, part of what we see is Christ described as coming down and He's actively harvesting all those who make it into the resurrection of eternal life -- all the righteous. Well, now we're going to see here in Revelation 7, they're all standing in heaven before the throne of the Father. Once again, Christ delivers the Kingdom to the Father. Now, let's pick up here in verse 9 of chapter 7.

Rev 7:9 *“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,”* (NKJV)

Once again, they're standing with Christ. But notice again how they were described: “all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues”. Very similar to the language we saw in Revelation 14, describing the group being addressed there. That's because they're both the same group. This is the rest of mankind. And this chapter here in Revelation 7, it's a little easier to figure out exactly what that's referring to here, because it's in contrast with the first half of the chapter that's describing the Firstfruits as spiritual Israel. But now let's pick up in verse 10.

“10) and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” 11) All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12) saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.” 13) Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?” 14) And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15) Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. 16) They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 17) for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (NKJV)

Notice, first of all, what we have pictured here is they're standing before the throne of God with Christ. They're in heaven. Well, it's a very similar picture to what we read in Revelation 14 with the Firstfruits. Again, this is the end of the story with the rest of mankind who make it into the resurrection to eternal life. Just like what's described in Revelation 14 with the Firstfruits.

Now, let me address one other thing here. The reference in verse 14, that's oftentimes a stumbling block for people. Because it refers to “these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation”. Now, unfortunately, we've kind of made a concept attached to this phrase, “the great tribulation”, that the Bible really doesn't put forward. In fact, if you do a word search in the Bible, what you're going to find is the three words, “the great tribulation” -- this is the only time in the Bible that those three words ever appear together. In fact, if you look not only in English, but in Greek that's true. And then if you look at just the words “great tribulation” not only the English words, but the Greek words that those come from -- when they appear together -- you'll find a handful of references where those two words appear together. But they oftentimes don't refer to the same thing. In fact, most of the references are in different contexts referring to different things.

The reason I point that out is we've coined that phrase today that when someone says "the great tribulation", we have it in our minds that, well, that refers to the time of trouble before Christ's return. And it refers to that and can only refer to that. And so, we lock in on that. And then we read the description of the great multitude here, and then we try to force that to fit. Now, I won't go into a lengthy discussion explaining all the details of how to unpack that. If you're interested in that -- the paper that I mentioned on my website -- "The 144,000 and the Great Multitude" is the title. That will go into that in great detail and explain that for you.

But what I want you to see in this sermon is we have a clear picture here. Because we started off in 1 Corinthians 15:24, where it says Christ "delivers the kingdom to the Father". And then we asked the question, how exactly do we understand that? Because we know all throughout the Bible, it's very clear that the Father -- it's His Kingdom. He's the "God" in the Kingdom of God. It's His kingdom. And He's always the primary guy in charge, running things and everything else and everyone else, including Christ, are His subordinates.

So, how do we understand that statement? Well, the key, as I mentioned earlier in the sermon, is understanding the whole focus of 1 Corinthians 15 is on the resurrection to eternal life. Now, again, there are two groups who receive the resurrection to eternal life. There are those called prior to Christ's return -- who are the Firstfruits -- and then those who will be called and receive their opportunity for salvation during the Eighth Day period. So, there are two different times that this happens.

But the logistics play out the same way both times. In both cases, Christ is the one who basically collects all those together who have now inherited the Kingdom of God and received the resurrection to eternal life. And He delivers them to the Father's throne to be accepted before Him. And see, once we understand those logistics, then we can understand exactly what Paul is referring to here.

Because as we covered in the beginning of this sermon, clearly Paul is not saying that Christ is doing everything and the Father's kind of out of the picture and uninvolved, and now Christ has wrapped everything up and now the Father can finally be involved. No, the Father is very actively involved the entire time because it's His Kingdom. He's actively involved in our lives today by dwelling personally, directly through His Spirit in converted Christians. And He's going to be actively hands-on involved throughout the entire process -- through the rest of the plan of salvation with mankind.

So, now when we look at this chapter, we can learn a number of lessons from this. One is the big lesson of interpreting things in context. The entire context of 1 Corinthians 15 is the resurrection to eternal life. And then when we look at both groups, both the Firstfruits and the rest of mankind. When they inherit the Kingdom, when they enter the Kingdom of God at the resurrection to eternal life, the way that they're "delivered to the Father" is Christ is the one who will collect all those newly formed God beings and deliver them to the Father.