Sanctification is the highway to joint heirship with Christ.

**Charles Strong's note: Although this article contains few scriptural references, it presents the essence of the “word of the kingdom” [the kingdom message], which is the dominant message throughout the entire Word of God.**

**Kingdom Basics
By Susan Cockran**

To understand the future Kingdom of Christ, we must understand a few basic facts from the Scripture:

God created Satan and the angels to be rulers in the universe. Satan was assigned rulership over the earth. But Satan was not satisfied with his position so he rebelled against God. God judged Satan for his rebellion. Part of Satan’s judgment was that he would lose his position as ruler over the earth. And this is why God made man and woman (Adam and Eve)—to replace Satan as rulers over the earth. You can see this in [Genesis 1:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26&t=NKJV) where God says:

“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over . . . all the earth. ([Genesis 1:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26&t=NKJV))

But God did not immediately place Adam and Eve in that position of rulership. God wanted to test Adam and Eve to see if they would be obedient to Him before allowing them to begin their rule. Satan knew that God was testing Adam and Eve so he interfered by tempting Eve to sin (by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree). When Eve sinned and caused Adam to join her in that sin, both of them became disqualified to rule the earth. This meant that Satan would continue ruling the earth temporarily until God produced another replacement ruler who would prove, through obedience, to be worthy of this position. And not only did man lose the right to rule over the earth, but man also came under the eternal judgment of God for sin (hell or the lake of fire).

But it was God’s intention for man to rule over the earth and God was not willing to let man be destroyed. So God provided a way to save man — a way to free man from the judgment of eternal hell and bring him back into the position of rulership for which he was created.

And this salvation for man came through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. And according to God’s plan, anyone who believes in Jesus, is freed from the judgment of everlasting hell and will live in eternity with God, enjoying His blessing.

And this freedom from eternal hell into eternal blessing with God is given to us as a free gift when we believe in Jesus. It is something that we do not have to work for and we can never lose.

But bringing man back into the position of rulership over the earth would be different. Because before any man can rule, he must first be tested — just as Adam and Eve were tested. So once a person believes in Jesus and has eternal life with God, then God begins testing that believer to see if they will qualify to rule with Christ over the earth. And this testing has to do with obedience to the Word of God. Believers who live their lives in obedience to God’s Word will inherit positions of rulership in the coming Kingdom of Christ.

This Kingdom will operate in two spheres. One sphere will be earthly. Jesus will have a city, a temple, and a throne on the earth in Jerusalem. And He will also have a throne in the heavenly sphere where Satan and his angels now reside. The Scripture tells us that “the heavens do rule” ([Daniel 4:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.26&t=NKJV)). This means that the ultimate rule over the earth comes from this heavenly sphere. Those who sit on these thrones in the heavenly sphere will be those who have total authority over the earth. And Jesus is not going to rule from the heavens alone. And neither will He rule alone from His throne on the earth.

The nation of Israel is going to be exalted to rule with Christ upon the earth over all the other nations that will exist during this time. And Christians who qualify through obedience to God’s Word will rule with Jesus from the heavens. They will rule over Israel, over all the nations, and over all God’s angels.

Most Christians don’t even realize that such a privilege in being offered to them. They think that believing in Christ and being saved from an eternal hell is the end of God’s salvation for them. But in reality, it is just the beginning. God doesn’t just want us to escape the judgment of hell. He wants to restore us to the purpose for which we were created — rulership. But the privilege of rulership is not automatically ours simply because we have believed in Christ and are saved for eternity. Eternity and the Kingdom age are two different segments in God’s economy. Life with God in eternity is given to us as a free gift when we believe in Christ. But life with Christ in the Kingdom age must be earned through faithful obedience to God and His Word.

Satan is still presently ruling as “the god of this age,” but because he disqualified himself through sin, he will not continue to rule. Once Christ returns to establish His Kingdom, the day of Satan’s rule will be over and God will replace Satan with Christ and those believers who have proven themselves worthy to rule with Him. And according to the signs Jesus gave us in His Word, we are presently on the verge of His coming. And when He comes, He will come first for the church in the rapture. And in the rapture we will be taken into heaven to be judged at what the Scripture calls the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is a judgment for believers only. And in this judgment Christ is going to examine the life of every Christian to determine whether or not that Christian qualifies to rule with Him in His Kingdom. If a believer has lived his life in such a way as to qualify to rule with Christ, then that believer will be honored before the Father and the angels in the judgment. And in addition to that, this faithful believer will be given a resurrected, glorified body that is like the body Christ Himself possesses. And best of all, this believer will be joined to Christ as His bride which means that this believer will have the honor of being in Christ’s presence — living with Him, working with Him, and sharing in His joyful bliss. This believer will be a co-heir with Christ. This means he will inherit on an equal basis with Christ all that Christ possesses — and the Scripture says that Christ is the “possessor of heaven and earth”— so this is quite an inheritance — more than our minds can comprehend. The Scripture also tells us that to receive this inheritance with Christ will bring true and complete happiness to the believer’s soul. We are told that apart from ruling with Christ, there will be no happiness, no satisfaction, and no joy.

But what about the believer who is not faithful during this lifetime and does not qualify to rule with Christ? When the unfaithful believer is judged at the Judgment Seat, his rebellion will be exposed before the Father and the angels. He will be rebuked by Christ and publicly shamed. And then the Scripture tells us that the unfaithful believer will be denied entrance into the Kingdom. He will not only be denied a position of rulership with Christ, but he won’t even be allowed to enter the Kingdom and enjoy its blessings.

Instead of entering the Kingdom, this believer will be “cast out” of the Kingdom into a place called “outer darkness.”

The Scripture describes outer darkness as a place where disobedient believers will “weep” and “gnash their teeth.” There will be weeping because the believer who goes to outer darkness will experience 1,000 years of bitter grief — the most extreme sorrow. And “gnashing of teeth” is a biblical expression that portrays great anguish and profound regret. The unfaithful believer experiences all of this for 1,000 years. This believer spends 1000 years weeping in bitter anguish over his wasted life — suffering profound regret for the choices he made. This weeping and gnashing of teeth is so horrific that the Scripture describes it as the loss of a believer’s soul. And his soul is lost in the sense that it is emptied of all happiness — utterly stripped of satisfaction — deprived of all joy. This believer’s soul suffers in darkness for the entire length of the Kingdom. This believer has forfeited his inheritance with Christ. He had forfeited the position of rulership for which man was created. And in forfeiting all this, he will suffer the chastening judgment of God in outer darkness.

And where is outer darkness located? Some speculate that it is in the heart of the earth. What we do know from Scripture is that it is not in the Kingdom. The earth at this time will be filled with the light of the glory of Christ. Therefore, this outer darkness is located somewhere not upon the earth. And perhaps the worst part about being in outer darkness is that you are separated from Christ. You can not see Him, be with Him, talk with Him, enjoy Him — you are cut off from Him and you are cut off from your fellow believers who qualified to enter the Kingdom and rule with Him. In this life, it is often easy for believers to live their daily lives cut off from fellowship with Christ —or in a very shallow relationship with Him. We have so many distractions that fill our soul —things that entertain us, keep us busy, bring us pleasure, etc. But in the day of His Kingdom, there will be nothing else. No television, no music, no careers, no hobbies —Christ will be the center of everything and all happiness will come from being close to Him. In that day we won’t have substitutions for Christ to comfort us as we do now. Instead we will feel the full force of the pain of complete emptiness.

Then, after the 1,000 years are fulfilled, the unfaithful believers will rejoin Christ and their faithful brethren to enter into eternity. In eternity there will be no more chastening and all Christians, faithful and unfaithful, will enjoy the blessing of God forever.

The Scripture tells us clearly how to avoid the outer darkness and obtain a co-inheritance with Christ. We are to give up our self-centered lives and focus on God and His Word. We are to strive to live holy lives of separation from sin and worldliness. We are to make righteous choices and deny our fleshly desires. Jesus said that very few Christians would even try to do this. He said that most Christians will find themselves disinherited at His Judgment Seat. The apostle Paul said entering the Kingdom is like being in a race. And the Kingdom inheritance is the prize. Paul said that our one goal in this life is to obtain that prize. We must run to win!

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