

# **THE SEVEN SPIRITS**

**for the Local Churches**

**Witness Lee**

**LIVING STREAM MINISTRY**

# THE SEVEN SPIRITS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCHES

by Witness Lee

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## CONTENTS

1. The Intensified Spirit
2. God's Revelation and God's Recovery
3. The Four Visions in Revelation
4. The Local Churches Being for Eating and Drinking Christ
5. The Burning Fire and the Flowing Water
6. The Christ in Revelation
7. Christ's Requirements of the Local Churches
8. Revelation Being a Book of Life
9. Revelation Being a Book of Praise
10. Revelation Being a Book of Victory

## PREFACE

These messages were taken from the book of Revelation concerning the seven Spirits of God for the local churches. They were given by Brother Witness Lee in the evening meetings of the 1969 summer conference in Los Angeles, California, on July 4 through 13, and were originally published in *The Stream*, Vol. 7, No. 4, November 1, 1969, and Vol. 8, No. 1 and No. 2, February 1 and May 1, 1970.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE INTENSIFIED SPIRIT

To see the intensified Spirit we need to spend a little time to look into the whole New Testament. The first chapter of the New Testament tells us how Christ was God incarnated to be a man, and this wonderful man is called Emmanuel, “God with us” (v. 23). God was incarnated to be a man so that He could be with us. Then, at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, we are told to go and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (28:19).

These are the two ends of the Gospel of Matthew. The beginning tells us that God was incarnated as a man to be with us, and the end says that we must be baptized into the Triune God—into the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. This is the first book of the New Testament.

### THE FATHER, THE SPIRIT, AND THE SON

Then when we come through the New Testament to the last book of Revelation, it is so interesting to notice that the Spirit of God is put into the second place of the Godhead. In Revelation 1:4-5 the seven Spirits of God are put before Jesus Christ in the order of the Godhead. This is because, as I have pointed out already (see *The Stream*, Feb. and May 1969), the age has been changed. Today is not the age of the Son but the age of the Spirit.

Let us read these verses: “John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.”

In Matthew there is first the Father, second the Son, and third the Spirit. It is so clear that it is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. But in Revelation it is the Father, the Spirit, and then the Son. Have you seen this change? In Matthew the Spirit is the third person of the Godhead, but in Revelation the third person becomes the second. There is a definite change. This is why we say that the age is changed. It is no longer the age of the Son but the age of the

Spirit. In the Gospels the Son was second, but now in the book of Revelation the Spirit becomes the second. I must say again that *the age has been changed!* It has been changed to the Spirit.

In these days I have been so burdened to tell the children of God that the age has been changed. Some may not agree with this. They may say, “How can you say this? What proof do you have to say that the age has been changed?” The proof is here in Revelation 1:4-5, in the change in the order of the Godhead. Are we living in the days of Matthew, or are we in the days of Revelation? There is no doubt that we are in the days of Revelation, and even at the end of the days of Revelation.

O brothers and sisters, the age has been changed! *The age has been changed!* Today is not the age of Matthew but the age of Revelation, and we must realize that now we are not at the beginning of the age of Revelation but at the end. The age has been changed to the Spirit.

Do you think that this is only my opinion? Read your Bible again. Matthew tells us that God was incarnated so that we might be baptized into the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. But in Revelation something has been changed. The Spirit becomes the second person of the Godhead.

## **THE SEVENFOLD SPIRIT**

Furthermore, the Spirit in Revelation is the sevenfold Spirit. The one Spirit becomes seven because it is now the age of the intensified Spirit. We need the sevenfold Spirit. This is not seven Spirits but the sevenfold Spirit, the intensified Spirit. How much we need the Spirit today! We need the Spirit seven times. Seven is the number of completion. We need the complete Spirit, the sevenfold Spirit.

Peter, John, and Matthew only needed the onefold Spirit, but today we need the sevenfold Spirit because we are so dead. Peter was not as dead as we are, so Peter only needed the onefold Spirit. But we are *too* dead. We need the Spirit to be intensified. We have dead teachings, we have dead doctrines, and we even make the Bible dead. We have so many dead churches, dead Christians, and dead books. Therefore, today we need the sevenfold Spirit. Are we in a living situation or a dead one? I believe we all would agree that we

are in a dead situation. We have the Bible, but we need the intensified Spirit to enliven us and make us living.

The Lord Jesus came at a time when all the Jewish people had the Old Testament. The religious leaders of the Jewish people had the Scripture, but they had the Scripture in dead letters. The Lord came to those who had the Scripture in a dead way; He came to those who had the doctrines and the dead knowledge of God; He came to those who had the dead written code. They were supposed to be so religious and so much for God. They spoke to people continually regarding the things of God. But what was their situation? They were *dead*! They were *dead* religious people. They were *dead* people with a Bible in *dead* letters and with the *dead* knowledge of God. Were they Gentiles? Were they pagans? No, they were the chosen people of God. But when God was incarnated as a man to be with us, who opposed Him? Who opposed the Lord Jesus? It was those who had the Bible in their hands, those who had the dead knowledge of God in their minds. They were supposed to be so much for God, but eventually, they put the incarnated God, the Lord Jesus, to death.

It is the same with today's situation in Christianity. What about your church? Is it dead or living? O brothers and sisters, the Lord be merciful to us that we do not remain the same as the Jews when Christ came. I am so burdened for the present situation of the Lord's people because of today's deadness: the dead teachings, the dead meetings, the dead "churches," the dead knowledge, the dead messages, the dead books, and even the dead "Bible."

Oh, the Lord be merciful to us. We are just *dead*! We have enough knowledge. We know everything. But the Bible in our hand is so dead. All the knowledge in our mind is so dead. What do we need? Do we need better expositions, better teachings, better doctrines, more books? No, we need the sevenfold intensified Spirit. It is not the knowledge but the sevenfold Spirit.

Read Revelation again. The age has been changed. Even the order of the Godhead has been changed, because of the deadness. Christianity today is dead. It is a dead religion. We need the book of Revelation. We need a change and a turn. Even in this book John the apostle was turned: "I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands" (1:12).

We all need a turn, and we all need to be turned. We need to be isolated from today's Christianity. At that time John was isolated on an island. *Then* he heard a voice, and when he turned, he saw seven golden lampstands. Let me ask you, "Have you seen?" I do not ask, "Do you know?" I ask, "Have you seen?"

We all need a turn from the dead doctrines to the sevenfold Spirit. We need a turn from the dead teachings to the sevenfold Spirit. We need a turn from the dead knowledge to the sevenfold Spirit. We even need a turn from our Bible of dead letters to the sevenfold Spirit.

It is not just my opinion that the age has been changed. From now on, the Lord will never honor the dead teachings. The dead teaching ministry is over. Today is the age of the sevenfold intensified Spirit.

Today the Spirit of God is the sevenfold Spirit, and this title of the Spirit is used four times in the book of Revelation (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). The Lord Jesus is the Holder of this intensified Spirit. "These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars" (3:1). The Lord is the Holder of the sevenfold Spirit, and He is also the Holder of the seven stars. He holds the sevenfold Spirit, and He holds us. So the sevenfold Spirit is just for us.

## **THE INTENSIFIED SPIRIT FOR THE LOCAL CHURCHES**

The age has truly been changed. It is not just a matter of the word spoken by the Lord or the word written in the Bible, but the speaking of the sevenfold Spirit. The intensified Spirit speaks to the local churches. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." This word has been repeated seven times by the Lord (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

Today people speak so much about the universal church, but they look down upon the local churches. However, the Lord Jesus in Revelation speaks to the local churches. If He is speaking to the local churches, yet you are outside the local churches, you will completely miss this book. I do believe this is why this book is closed to so many. They only know the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls. They have never seen the sevenfold Spirit for the local churches, because they are not in the local churches. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to whom? Is it to the saints,

the universal church, the church in the heavens, or the New Jerusalem? No, it is to the churches, to the local churches.

So we see that the sevenfold Spirit is for the local churches. So many Christians have not seen the sevenfold Spirit. But this is in the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible. The Spirit's position has been changed from the third place to the second place, and He has been intensified. One Spirit has become the sevenfold Spirit, and this is for the purpose of the local churches. It is not for you or me individually or for the church in the heavens. It is for the local churches on earth. "To the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace...from the seven Spirits" (1:4). The sevenfold Spirit is not for any individual or for the so-called universal church but for the local churches on this earth.

Today we need the intensified Spirit because of the degradation of the church. When the book of Revelation was written, the church had become degraded. The Lord became the intensified Spirit because of the degradation of the church. The history of the church tells us that even in the last part of the first century while the apostle John was still alive, the church had degraded from the Spirit to religion. The church had fallen from the living Spirit to dead religion. It was in such a situation that the Lord wrote this book to the seven local churches, using the title of the sevenfold Spirit. Under the degradation of the church, what we need is not religion or doctrines but the intensified Spirit.

## **SEVEN LAMPS OF FIRE**

The sevenfold Spirit is also the seven lamps of burning fire. "Out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (4:5). Why did the Spirit become like seven burning lamps? It is because the degraded church had become so cold. All the churches were like refrigerators, so the sevenfold Spirit came down to set them afire. Today the churches do not need cold teachings; they need the burning Spirit. We do not need to be coldly taught; we need to be set on fire.

Some people say that we must have a sober mind. But I am afraid that what they mean is not a sober mind but a cold mind. We may be exceedingly sober in a sense, but in another sense so cold. Are you burnt and burning? I do not

want to teach you; I want to burn you. We must be set on fire to be burnt and burning. In such a cold age we do not need cold teachings and cold doctrines; we need the burning fire. The intensified Spirit is the burning fire to burn us.

Some say that we must keep a good order. When we are so cold, everything is orderly; but if this building were on fire, everyone would shout, “Fire! Fire!” Everything would be upside down. Cold teaching keeps us so silent, but the burning fire burns us until we cannot be silent. Do we need burning or teaching? Hallelujah! We need the burning. We need to be revolutionized.

Christianity is too silent and too cold. That is why we need to be burnt and burning all the time. The sevenfold Spirit is the seven burning lamps to set us on fire. This is what the degraded church, the dead church, the cold church, needs.

One further point: The seven Spirits are the seven lamps for enlightening. When we are cold and dead, we are in darkness. Coldness, deadness, and darkness always go together. When we need the burning and enlivening, we also need the enlightening. Light brings in life and warmth. The sevenfold Spirit is the enlightening lamps of burning fire. When He burns, He enlightens and enlivens us as well. He enlightens and enlivens us by burning us. Today we need the burning as well as the enlightening and enlivening of the intensified Spirit so that we may be set on fire to see the local churches and the Lord’s purpose and so that we might be made living.

### **THE SEVEN EYES OF THE LAMB**

It is so strange that the intensified Spirit is not only the seven lamps but also the seven eyes of the Lord. “I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” (5:6). When the Lord was on earth, He had only two eyes, and I believe His eyes were always so mild and gentle. They would never cause one to be afraid of Him. But now He has seven eyes, just as the burning lamps. What kind of Jesus is this? We need such a Jesus today with seven eyes as the seven burning lamps. Then when He sees us, He will set us on fire. If His eyes look at us, we will be burnt. This is all we need today.

Yet we must keep in mind that this burning, sevenfold Spirit is not for any individual or for the so-called universal church. It is definitely for the local churches. If we would be burnt and burning, we must be in the local churches. The book of Revelation is not written to any individual saint or to the universal church in the heavens. It is a book written to the local churches on the earth. “What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches” (1:11). If we are going to listen, understand, and receive blessing from this book, we must be in the local churches. To receive anything, we must be in the proper position. The Lord will not change His position; we must change ours. The right position is to be in the local churches, for the Lord sent this book to the local churches. If we are not in the local churches, we lose our position, and if we miss the position, how can we understand? It is impossible. We must be in the local churches. This is not a small thing, for Revelation tells us clearly that the sevenfold Spirit is for the seven local churches.

### **THE SPEAKING SPIRIT**

There is something more that we must see about the intensified Spirit. In the beginning of each of the seven epistles in Revelation, the Lord told John to write what *He* said (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). But at the end of each epistle, the Lord said that we must hear what the *Spirit* says to the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). At the beginning it is the Lord who speaks, but at the end it is the Spirit. We can read today what the Lord has put into writing, but simply reading the word of the Lord is not enough. We must also hear what the Spirit says. Only to have the written word is not adequate. We all need to hear the speaking Spirit.

The Old Testament always says, “Thus says Jehovah.” But in Revelation it is, “The Spirit says.” We all must realize that the age has been changed. Today is the age of the Spirit. What the Lord says in the Word is not enough; we must listen to what the Spirit says.

We have both the Bible and the Spirit. The Bible is a book which is already written, but what the Spirit says is something which is spoken instantly. Today’s dead Christianity only takes care of the written Bible. They argue that they are fundamental and scriptural. But they are fundamentally dead and scripturally cold. They only have the beginning of the seven epistles; they do not have the ending. They do not have the speaking Spirit.

At the end of each epistle, the Lord Jesus tells us that we must hear what the Spirit says to all the churches. Today we must listen to what the sevenfold Spirit speaks to us. We must not only read the written book but also listen to the speaking Spirit.

When I was young, I was taught that a Christian must keep the word of the Bible and do everything according to the Bible. I was never taught that I must listen to the speaking of the living Spirit. Even today many so-called Christian churches and teachers emphasize that we must understand the Bible, walk according to the Bible, and do everything according to the Bible. But the Lord Jesus tells us that this is not enough. I do not mean that we should drop the Bible. But beside the Bible, we need the speaking of the living Spirit. To only have the written Bible is not sufficient. We also need the speaking Spirit. We need the Spirit to speak to us through the Bible. We need the Spirit to make the Bible a living book to us. Praise the Lord, we have the written word in our hands, and we have the living Spirit in our spirit. We must have both. We need the Bible, and we need the Spirit—and even more, the intensified Spirit.

It is necessary that we read the written word. But it is more necessary to listen to the Spirit. We must hear what the Spirit says to the churches. It is not to the saints, or to the church, but to the churches. It is not to the church in the heavens but to the local churches on earth. This is why in this book of the Bible it does not say that the Lord says, or the apostle John says, but the Spirit says. In the Old Testament it is “Jehovah says.” In the Gospels it is “Jesus says.” In the Epistles it is always “the apostles say.” But in this book it is “the Spirit says.” This is because the age has been changed to the Spirit.

Eventually, in the book of Revelation, the Spirit and the church are one. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come!” (22:17). At the beginning the Spirit was speaking to the churches. But at the end the Spirit and the bride (composed of all the churches) speak together. The Spirit and the church have become one. This is the fulfillment of Matthew 28. The church has been baptized into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Now the Spirit and the church are one.

## **WALKING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT**

We must learn to have our daily Christian walk according to the Spirit. I have mentioned already that I was taught when I was young that we must walk according to the Bible. But eventually, I found in the Bible that we must

walk according to the Spirit. “That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit” (Rom. 8:4). Galatians 5:16 and 25 say the same thing.

Some today would argue concerning whether we are right or wrong. But we would rather be livingly wrong than dead right. Whether we are wrong or not is questionable, but one thing is sure: those who argue about right and wrong are really dead. As long as you are dead, what is the value of being right? Sometimes I have said that the most right persons are those who are buried in the cemeteries. They can never do anything wrong. From the first day of the year to the last, they are always so dead right.

We must take care of whether we are living or dead more than whether we are right or wrong. We must walk livingly according to the Spirit. It is not a matter of whether we are right, but of whether we are living. It is not a matter of how to do this or how to do that; it is a matter of listening to and following the sevenfold Spirit.

The age is changed to the Spirit, so we all need a turn. So many people speak much about the church, but they have never been turned. To see the local churches with the intensified Spirit, we need a turn. John said that after he turned, he saw. I do believe that John at that time was quite disappointed. He knew the churches were deteriorating, and he was in exile from all the saints on the island of Patmos. In his disappointment he heard a voice, and when he turned to see the voice, he saw seven golden lampstands. He turned and he saw.

Oh, how we need to turn today! We need to turn from doctrines to the sevenfold Spirit. We need to turn from teachings to the sevenfold Spirit. We need to turn from religion to the sevenfold Spirit. We need to turn from Christian traditions to the sevenfold Spirit. We need to turn from what we know to the sevenfold Spirit. It is only when we turn from our mind to the Spirit that we will see that the sevenfold intensified Spirit is for the local churches.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **GOD'S REVELATION AND GOD'S RECOVERY**

The last book in the Bible is a book of gold. At the beginning there are the seven golden lampstands, and at the end the golden city, the New Jerusalem. What is mentioned at the beginning and at the end of any book is always the main content of that book. There are the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls mentioned in this book, but these are not in the beginning or at the end. At the beginning are the seven golden lampstands, and at the end is the golden city. We also are told clearly that the seven golden lampstands are the seven local churches. We are also told that the golden city is the bride of Christ. Therefore, at both ends of this book, we see the church. First, there are the local churches, and then eventually, there is the ultimate consummation of the churches, which is the New Jerusalem. Therefore, we must have a thorough look into the local churches, for as we have seen, this book is a book of the seven Spirits for the local churches.

### **FOUR MAIN FIGURES**

The Bible is a volume of sixty-six books, with over one thousand chapters. There are many subjects, many doctrines, and many things covered in this book, but the main figures are only four. In the whole Bible there are only four main figures.

In a painting of a tiger, there may be many things in the background, but the main figure in the painting is the tiger. In the background there may be mountains, woods, and many other items, but it is principally a portrait of a tiger. Our attention must be focused upon the tiger.

The Bible is also a painting. It is a divine painting, a spiritual painting, an eternal and heavenly painting with thousands and even millions of things in the background. But what are the main figures? At the very beginning of the first page, it says, "In the beginning *God...*" (Gen. 1:1). *God, therefore, is the first figure.* We all must say, "In the beginning *God...*" Then after this, the Bible tells us how God created the heavens and the earth and how He did many other things.

But even in the Old Testament there is another figure presented by types and prophecies. *This is Christ, the second main figure in the Bible.* Christ is typified and prophesied in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is simply God as well as Christ typified and prophesied, but Christ has not yet come.

Then at the beginning of the New Testament, this wonderful One came. The first page of the New Testament speaks of Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Christ is the second figure of the Bible.

What is the third main figure after Christ? In Matthew 16 the Lord Jesus asked His disciples to tell Him who He was. Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). But this is not all. The Lord then said to Peter, “And I *also* say to you...” (v. 18). To only see Christ is not enough. There is the *also*. “And I *also* say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My *church*, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” *So we have the church as the third main figure in the Bible.*

We see Christ in the four Gospels, and from the four Gospels to Acts, we see the church. But is this all? No, as we go on to the Epistles, we see that the church becomes the churches (Rom. 16:4, 16; 1 Cor. 7:17; 11:16; 14:33-34; 16:1, 19; 2 Cor. 8:1, 18-19, 23-24; 11:8, 28; 12:13; Gal. 1:2, 22; 1 Thes. 2:14; 2 Thes. 1:4). Even in Acts we can see this taking place. There is one at Jerusalem (8:1), another at Antioch (13:1), and another one at Ephesus (20:17). There are churches in many different cities (9:31; 14:23; 15:41).

Then as we come through all the Epistles to the last book of Revelation, we see that this book is mainly about the churches. *So the fourth main figure of the Bible is the churches.* There is not only the church but also the churches.

The main figure in the painting we referred to as an illustration is the tiger. If we can see the tiger, we can forget about the things in the background. There are thousands of Christian books written today. They speak mostly about the “mountains,” the “trees,” the “grass,” and so many other things, but they have forgotten about the “tiger.”

What does the Bible speak about? If we were to ask the wives, they would tell us that the Bible says in Ephesians 5 that the husbands must love their wives. Do you see how shortsighted we are? All the wives see is that their husbands must love them. To them, this is the main thing of which the Bible

speaks. They feel the Bible is wonderful because it tells us that husbands must love their wives.

Then if we were to ask the husbands what the Bible speaks about, they would say that it says the wives must submit to their husbands. We all have been blinded by our natural tendency and concept. We only see some little things in the background according to our concept, and we miss the “tiger.”

Have you seen the four main figures in the Bible? Have you seen God, Christ, the church, and the churches? The sisters must forget about their husbands, and the brothers must forget about their wives. We must forget about all our preoccupations and see God, Christ, the church, and the churches. Hallelujah!

We need not try to remember all the items in the background. We need to just remember the “tiger.” The “tiger” must be deeply impressed into our mind. We must only care for God, Christ, the church, and the churches.

### **PROGRESSIVE REVELATION**

To know God is indeed easy. I believe there has never been a person on the earth who has not known something about God. All the Jews know about God, and even the heathen know of God. All people know about God. In the classroom they may say that there is no God, but in private they ask, “What about God?” In the school they may deny the existence of God, but at home they ask themselves, “Suppose there is a God, what shall I do?” When we contact the unbelievers, we should not argue with them about God. They know about God already.

To know God is easy, but to know Christ is not so easy. All the Hebrews know about God, but not all of them know about Christ. They know God, but they do not know about Christ. They know God, but they do not know Christ. All the Muslims know God, but they do not know Christ. To know Christ is a real improvement upon knowing God.

All human beings know about God, but only a small number know both God and Christ, because Christ is a real mystery. He is God, yet He became a man. He was God, yet He was God in man. I do believe He was a small man while He was on this earth in the flesh. Jesus was a small man, yet that small

man was God. God was embodied in Him. Is this not wonderful? So we see that to know Christ is not as easy as to know God. But those of us who are Christians know Christ as our God.

However, to go on from Christ to know the church is even more difficult. Many Christians know Christ, but not so many know the church. To know the church is a greater improvement. We all need to be improved again and again. We need to know God first, we need to know Christ second, and then we must go on to know the church. The church is also a mystery. God is in Christ, and Christ today is in the church. God is embodied in Christ, and Christ is realized in the church.

But this is not all. From the church we must go on to see the churches. Comparatively speaking, it is easy to know the church, but it is not so easy to know the churches. Some Christians know the church, but they do not know the churches. They talk a lot about the church, but they have not seen the churches.

How many books do you have in your Bible? Of course, you will say that you have sixty-six. Do you know God, and do you know Christ? If you do, then you have the Old Testament plus the four Gospels. But do you know something about the church? If you do not, you only have forty-three books in your Bible.

Some may say that to know God and to know Christ is sufficient to go to heaven. This is true, but your Bible is still only of forty-three books. However, if your Bible has sixty-six books, you must know God, Christ, the church, and the churches. Only then do you really have sixty-six books in your Bible.

The Bible shows us clearly that the church has become the local churches in many localities. Does this mean that the heavenly church is made earthly by making it local? No; it means the heavenly church is made locally golden. It is local but not earthly. It is local and golden.

In the past some have said that they know God, they know Christ, and they know the church. They are clear from Ephesians that the church is the Body of Christ. But they will not agree to have the local churches. Therefore, they cut off so many Epistles, but especially the last book, from their Bible. Their Bible only has sixty-five books.

If we have sixty-six books in our Bible, we not only have God, Christ, and the church, but we also have the local churches. In the Old Testament we have God. In the four Gospels we have Christ. In Acts and the Epistles we have the church and the churches, and in Revelation we have the churches, which are emphasized as being local. Therefore, to know the churches, the local churches, is the greatest improvement in knowing the four main figures revealed in the Bible.

## **BEING UP TO DATE**

My burden is that we all must see the last book of the Bible. Revelation tells us about the local churches, not the one church in the heavens. To know God is not adequate. To know Christ is also not adequate. Even to know the church is not adequate. We must go on to know the churches, which are local. If we are up to date in following the Lord, we will realize that today is the day of the local churches. In the last age of God's dispensation, and in the last book of His Scripture, the main thing is the local churches.

I must repeat again that if we are up to date with the Lord, we must be in a local church. The last book of the Bible is written to the local churches. If we are not in the local churches, we are not in a position, and thus not entitled, to receive this book.

We all know that the books of the Bible are part of the divine will given to us. It is a title deed, a testament, a will. The last part of this will is given to the local churches. If we are not in the local churches, we do not have the position to inherit this part of the will. But praise the Lord, if we get into the local churches, we are entitled to this part! The book of Revelation was written to the local churches, so only in the local churches are we in the position to inherit this book. If we have nothing to do with the local churches, we have nothing to do with this book. We must be brought up to this book.

## **THE LORD'S RECOVERY**

We all realize that everything is in the Bible. But not long after the New Testament was completed, the church began to lose all the important things found in the Bible. Eventually, by the fifteenth century, everything was lost. Very little of God was known. Then the Lord began His recovery at the time of the Reformation with Martin Luther. First, He recovered justification by faith.

Then after this, He recovered many more things. But the things regarding the church were not recovered until the eighteenth century. The first time after the Reformation that Christians began to practice the church life was when the Moravian Brethren came together under the leadership of Count Zinzendorf. They practiced the church life, but they did not have adequate knowledge regarding the church. They were, however, inspired to come together to practice the church life. They came from Moravia and settled in Bohemia, a part of today's Austria.

The doctrine of the church was largely inadequate until 1829. If we read the history of the church, especially the history of the Lord's recovery, we will see that it was from 1829 that the British Brethren, under the leadership of John Nelson Darby, became clear concerning the doctrine of the church. In the early part of their church life, there was tremendous reality. But gradually, they lost the reality and have declined very much to mere doctrine. The doctrine is good, but only to have the doctrine without the reality is empty.

Then in the first part of this century, the Lord began to recover something more regarding the church. What He recovered was the reality, or we may call it the spirituality, of the church. The spiritual principles of the Body of Christ were recovered mainly in the first third of this century.

### **THE PRACTICALITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**

Nearly all the books written in the last century by the Brethren were concerning the doctrine of the church. There was a shortage of the reality and even of the spirituality. But in the first part of this century many books were written regarding the reality, the spirituality, and all the spiritual principles of the Body of Christ. It was wonderful, it was real, but it was not practical. There was the doctrine and the reality and in a sense the spirituality, but no practicality. Those who saw the spirituality of the church simply did not know how to practice it.

It was after 1930 that the Lord used Brother Watchman Nee to recover the practicality of the church life. He not only saw the doctrine and the reality, but also the practicality. At least three or four books were written by Watchman Nee concerning the practicality of the church life. The first was published in 1934, and he asked me to write an introduction to that book, which I did. This book was written before *The Normal Christian Church Life* and was

called *The Assembly Life*. The messages in this book were given in January of 1934. This was the start of the publication of Brother Nee's vision regarding the practicality of the church life.

Then later, in 1937, Brother Nee gave us another series of messages, which was clear and adequate regarding the practicality of the church life. These messages were put into a book in Chinese in 1938 and translated into English in 1939. The English translation was originally entitled *Concerning Our Missions* but is now called *The Normal Christian Church Life*. This is the second book by Brother Nee regarding the practicality of the church life.

Then after the war, from 1948 until his imprisonment in 1952, Brother Nee gave many messages on the practicality of the church life. We have chosen some of these messages and put them together in the book *Further Talks on the Church Life* by Watchman Nee. This could be considered the third book by Brother Nee regarding the practicality of the church life.

This is the history of the Lord's recovery of the church life. He first recovered the practice of the church life in the eighteenth century with the Moravian Brethren. But that was not adequate. Then in the nineteenth century He recovered the doctrine of the church, and at the beginning of this century the reality and spirituality of the church. Then after 1930 He began to recover the practicality of the church life. Now we have inherited all the items of the Lord's recovery. We have inherited the doctrine, the spirituality, and the practicality. We are not boasting in a proud way, but we can humbly say by His mercy that we have the doctrine, the spirituality, and the practicality of the church life. Where is the practicality? *The practicality of the church life is in the local churches*. If we do not have the local churches, we do not have the practicality of the church life.

## **THE CHURCH AGE**

There are some who talk so much about the universal church. It is wonderful and so spiritual. But where is it? Where is the universal church? It is so heavenly, so spiritual, so eternal, so wonderful, and so marvelous, but where is it today? It is really invisible. Those who are so much for the universal church say that the invisible church is the real one, and all the visible churches are the false ones. Of course, it is easy to say this. They tell you that something is wonderful, but if you ask them where it is, they can only

say that it is invisible. It is so heavenly, so spiritual, so eternal, so wonderful, and so marvelous. But it is invisible today. That is all. It is just invisibly wonderful, invisibly heavenly, invisibly spiritual, and invisibly eternal. But where is its practicality?

Do not think that someday we will be in the church in the heavens. When we get to heaven, the church age will be over. Even when we get into the New Jerusalem, that will not be the church age. *Today* is the age of the church.

Do not talk about the church in the future. The church is not something in the future; the church is something of today. The church is not something in the heavens but in the places where we are on the earth. Praise the Lord, there is a church in Los Angeles today. Even in this evil district of Hollywood there is a church today.

In the Gospels, in Matthew 16, the Lord began to talk about the church. Then in Acts, in all the Epistles, and in Revelation the main matter concerns the church. If the Bible is mainly about the church, we must have something practical today. This is necessary for the Lord's return, and this is a real shame to the enemy. I say again loudly and clearly that in the city that is famous for Hollywood, nearly the most evil city on the earth, there is a church today. There is a golden lampstand in Los Angeles. This is a real glory to Christ and a shame to the enemy.

Some Christian teachers say that in this evil age it is an impossibility to have a real church; we must wait until that day. We all must reject this kind of teaching. It is one hundred percent wrong. The future age is not the church age. When the future age begins, the church age will be over.

It is like someone telling us to see a football game tomorrow morning, but when we get there, the game is over. The game was not in the morning but the night before. We must go to see the game tonight and not wait until tomorrow morning; then it will be too late. Praise the Lord, we are in the "game" now! Hallelujah! Regardless of how dark or how evil the age is, we are in the "game." We are playing the "game" here in the local church today.

## **THE TIDE OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES**

Let me tell you what is on my heart and deep within my spirit. From what I have seen in the past six years in traveling through this country, I am fully convinced that the Lord is sweeping over the United States. He is sweeping from the West Coast to the East Coast for the local churches.

There has been a rumor in the past two or three years that there will be a big earthquake with a tidal wave on the West Coast, and Los Angeles will drop into the ocean. When I heard this, I said, "Yes, there will be a big earthquake, but not for this city to go down into the ocean but to rise up." There will be a tide, but it will be a tide of the local churches sweeping throughout the United States.

If you do not believe me, simply wait and see. No one can stand against this tide. This is the Lord's doing, and this is the Lord's moving. It is not a human movement. Before His return, the Lord must recover the church life in the localities. He must build up the local churches. I have the full assurance that the Lord will use the United States for this purpose.

I do not care what people say about the United States. There are so many opinions, but I say that they are all nonsense. The Lord will keep and protect the United States for His purpose. The Lord will keep this country to recover the local churches as a real preparation for His return.

This is what I mean when I say that we must be up to date with the Lord. The Lord is moving to recover the local churches. It is not a matter of doctrine; it is a matter of the tide, the flood, the moving, of the Lord.

The Brethren saw the doctrine, but they stopped there; they would not go on with the Lord. But the Lord could not wait. The Lord went on to recover the reality and the spirituality of the church. Then the first group began to criticize the second group: they said that the spirituality was not according to the doctrine. Thus, they started to be and still are against the second group. But the sad story has been repeated. The second group was used by the Lord in the beginning of the twentieth century to recover the reality of the church, yet they also stopped there; they would not go on with the Lord. Yet the Lord could not wait. He has gone on to recover the practicality of the church life. So now the first group plus the second group are all opposing the third group.

What will come after the practicality? I believe that the Lord will come back. The Lord will prepare His bride by recovering the local churches, the practicality of the church life. Praise the Lord for His recovery! Praise the Lord for the doctrine, the reality, and the practicality of the church life. The practicality of the church life is in the local churches. God is in Christ, Christ is in the church, and the church is in the local churches. So to be up to date is to be up to the local churches. We must be in the local churches. This is God's divine way.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE FOUR VISIONS IN REVELATION**

#### **IN SPIRIT**

In the book of Revelation the writer, the apostle John, tells us four times that he was in spirit. The first time he was in spirit on the Lord's Day and saw seven golden lampstands: "I was in spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet...And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands" (1:10, 12).

The second time he was in spirit, he saw a throne: "After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will show you the things that must take place after these things. Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting" (4:1-2).

The third time, John was carried away in spirit to the wilderness and saw the great Babylon: "He carried me away in spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns...And on her forehead there was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (17:3, 5).

The fourth time, John was carried away in spirit to a high mountain and saw the New Jerusalem: "He carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (21:10).

Four times John was in spirit, and every time he saw a vision. The book of Revelation is composed of these four visions.

#### **THE LOCAL CHURCHES**

In the first vision the apostle John saw the seven golden lampstands, and these golden lampstands are the seven local churches. Therefore, the first

vision was the vision of the local churches. This is covered in the first three chapters.

## **THE JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD**

In the second vision John saw a throne, and the One who sat on the throne had a sealed scroll in His right hand. Out of this scroll there were seven seals, and out of the seven seals were seven trumpets, and included in the seven trumpets were seven bowls. The seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls are the different judgments of God upon the world. This is covered in chapters 4 through 16. In other words, these thirteen chapters contain the second vision of this book, the vision of the divine judgment of God upon this sinful and evil world.

## **THE GREAT BABYLON**

In chapter 17 John was again in spirit; but this time he was carried away because he was to see something awful and horrible, which no human word can describe. He was carried away in spirit into the wilderness. If we would see something, we must be carried away from it a certain distance. When we are too close, we cannot see clearly, but when we are carried away, it becomes so clear.

John was carried away into the wilderness and had a clear view. There he saw a sinful woman sitting upon a beast. This is the third vision. If we read this book carefully with references from other books of the Bible, we will realize that the woman signifies religion, and the beast the political government. Strictly speaking, the beast here is the Roman Empire, while the woman signifies the Roman Catholic Church. A woman joins herself with a beast (i.e., religion joins itself with politics). On her forehead there was a name written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT. This vision of the great Babylon is covered in chapters 17 and 18.

The Lord tells us clearly that this woman, the great Babylon, is a harlot. She is also called the mother of the harlots. Who are all her daughters? I do not like to say, but I believe we all know. Every Bible student recognizes that the great Babylon signifies the Roman Catholic Church, and the Roman Catholic Church as the great harlot is the mother of many harlots.

The Roman Catholic Church is a mixture. She has the gold, the precious stone, and the pearls, the three items used for the building up of the New Jerusalem; but she has something more. Let us read Revelation 17:4: “The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication.” Although she was gilded with gold, precious stone, and pearls, she was first clothed in purple and scarlet. These are not things for the New Jerusalem. Therefore, this woman is a real mixture. There is something of gold, precious stone, and pearls; yet these are rather superficial and outward. She was only *gilded* with them. The first things were the purple and the scarlet.

All the cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church wear scarlet robes and a scarlet hat—everything is scarlet, and the pope wears purple. But there is nothing scarlet and purple in the New Jerusalem. There is undoubtedly something of God in the Roman Catholic Church. Even such a spiritual sister as Madame Guyon was there. She was a real precious stone, but she was under the purple and the scarlet.

What is this great Babylon? It is the mixture of Christianity. The great Babylon is a harlot mother with many harlot daughters. The Roman Catholic Church is the mother, and the denominations are the daughters.

## **THE NEW JERUSALEM**

The fourth vision is that of the New Jerusalem, which is covered from chapter 19 through chapter 22. These four visions compose the entire content of the book of Revelation. So we see that this book simply speaks about these four things: the local churches, the world under God’s judgment, the great Babylon as a harlot mother with many harlot daughters, and the New Jerusalem.

The local churches are in the beginning, and the New Jerusalem is at the end. In between are the world and the great Babylon under God’s judgment. God is going to get rid of them. The world will be judged, and Babylon will go up in smoke! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! To God, a thousand years are as one day. If we will be patient, we will see Him judge all the items of the world and the mixture of Babylon. The seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls are all for judging these two categories of things. God is going to judge

them completely and thoroughly. We have the full assurance that they will be entirely eliminated by His judgment.

## **THE PLACE OF MIXTURE**

There are three places where we may be today; of course, the New Jerusalem as the fourth place is in the future. Where are you? Are you in the local churches, the world, or Babylon? Praise the Lord, we must be in the local churches. We should not be in the world or remain in Babylon any longer.

Where is the Roman Catholic Church? Unquestionably, it is in Babylon. Then where are the denominations? We all must answer this question before the Lord. I am not saying that there are no real believers in the denominations, and I am not saying that there is nothing of the Lord there.

The great harlot is gilded with gold, precious stone, and pearls, but she is a mixture. This harlot is the same woman mentioned in Matthew 13. In the seven parables of that chapter, there is a parable spoken by the Lord of a woman who put some leaven into fine flour. Christ is the fine flour given to us by God as our food, but here is a woman putting some leaven into the flour. Leaven in the Bible speaks of that which ruins or corrupts. A mixture of fine flour with leaven is something impure. The flour is of God, but the leaven is of this woman, the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, there is a mixture.

The denominations more or less follow in the same steps. So the great Babylon is the mother of many harlots. It is exceedingly ugly. All the bread we eat day by day is made of flour with leaven. When it is leavened, it is much easier to eat. This is just the excuse of Christianity. Christianity uses mixture so that it will be easier for people to join them.

Many times I have said that the birth of Christ, the incarnation of the Lord, is the fine flour, but Christmas is the leaven. How much pagan corruption and ruin has been brought in by the great harlot with Christmas! If we are clear about this, we will have nothing to do with Christmas and its Santa Claus, Christmas stockings, and Christmas tree. Have you ever traced the history of Christmas? All these things came from paganism. Even December 25, a date chosen by the Roman Catholic Church, is a pagan day for worshipping the sun god. All this mixture came from the mother and is followed by the daughters.

## **THE FREE GROUPS**

We know where the Roman Catholic Church is, and we know where the denominations are, but where are the free groups? I believe we all know. I do not like to say anything regarding this, but I have the burden to present this picture to you. This is not my interpretation or my opinion. If we are honest before the Lord and faithful to His Word, we must look at this picture to consider where we must be. I do not like to say where the free groups are, but I am certain that they are not in the local churches.

If we mean business with the Lord and sincerely go on with Him, where must we be? There is no argument; we must be in the local churches. You may say that you are one hundred percent against the great Babylon and the world, but where are you? Are you in the local churches? Simply to say something definitely negative is not enough. We must be definitely positive. Are you Mr. Smith? No. Are you Mr. Johnson? No. Are you Mr. Brown? No. Then who are you? You may say that you are nobody, but you are still somebody. You may use a lot of different terms—*nondenominational*, *interdenominational* and *super-denominational*—but where are you and who are you and what are you?

My burden from the Lord is to present a picture of His last book to us. Then we will know where we must be. Some may say that they do not care for this, because in time they will be in the New Jerusalem. They are not for the local churches or for the great Babylon, but for the New Jerusalem. This sounds nice, but where are they in these days? If we all could be in the New Jerusalem now, that would be wonderful! But I am afraid we must remain on the earth for some years. Then what shall we do with these years? It is very difficult to wander about without a home. If we are faithful to the Lord, we must make a decision about this matter.

## **FALSE ONENESS AND REAL ONENESS**

My second burden is to expose the subtlety of the enemy. When we were in the denominations and began to see the light concerning the Lord's way, the subtlety of the enemy was to condemn us by saying that we were only causing more divisions. This is a real subtlety of the evil one. Do you think we could have genuine oneness in Babylon? It is impossible. In Babylon is the false oneness. That is the oneness in the realm of division. We must not be cheated.

If anyone is causing division, it is Babylon, the place of division. Even the oneness in Babylon is a divided and dividing oneness.

In the good land of Canaan, Jerusalem was the only place where all the people of Israel were united to be one. Later, they were all carried away in captivity to Syria, to Egypt, and mostly to Babylon. How could the oneness be kept in Babylon? Strictly speaking, anything in Babylon is a division. To realize the proper and unique oneness, we must go back to the ground of oneness. That is the proper realm, the proper place, the proper standing, and the proper position for the children of God to realize the real oneness. We must not be cheated by any kind of nice talk. We need spiritual discernment to see through the situation of Babylon.

There are some who say that it is rather difficult for the Lord's people to go back to the original standing. They say, "See how many believers there are in the denominational churches. It is too difficult for them to leave." But even in the type in the Old Testament, not many of the captives went back to Jerusalem. Only a small number returned; the majority of the captives remained in captivity. We must not be cheated. We do not care so much for the numbers as we do for the place of real oneness.

### **THE RIGHT POSITION**

Still, there are some who say that since the church includes all the believers, and as we could not expect all the believers to come out of the denominations, then it is not possible to have the church. If we could not have all the believers, how could we have the church?

In reply, let us refer to a certain situation in the world today. We know there are at least thirteen million Hebrew people now on the earth—in New York alone, there are about three million. But of these thirteen million, only about two million have gone back to Palestine to form the nation of Israel. The number of Hebrew people in New York, then, is much greater than those who returned to Palestine; yet those in Palestine are called the nation of Israel. Suppose some of the Hebrews in New York are unhappy with this and say, "Why do you call yourselves the nation of Israel? Aren't we Hebrews as well as you?" If I were one of those who went back, I would answer, "All right, if you would like to be the nation of Israel, come back to the right position of the nation of Israel. Do not stay in New York." They could have no argument.

Many times people have asked me, “Why do you call yourselves *the church* in Los Angeles? Are we not the church?” I answered by saying, “You are if you come back to the right position.” Do not remain in the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, or some other denomination. Do not remain in any kind of denomination. As long as you remain in a denomination, you simply lose your position. In other words, in the setting of the illustration we have used, you are Hebrews, but you are in New York. You are not in the right place to be the nation of Israel. If you claim to be the nation of Israel, you must come back to the place where the nation of Israel should be.

### **ACCORDING TO ITS KIND**

There are others who say that we should not say we are the church in a certain place because we are so small a number. This sounds good, but it is also in the realm of the subtlety of the enemy.

Let me illustrate it in this way. Suppose the Smith family has twenty-two members, yet due to certain reasons, they gradually leave until only one remains. Later, one or two realize that they are the members of the Smith family, and they return. But they are still short of nineteen, and the others will not come back. So these three say, “By the Lord’s mercy, we are the Smith family.” But those who left begin to argue with them by saying, “Why do you call yourselves the Smith family? You cannot represent us. Although we will not come back, please do not say that you are the Smith family.” Then those who came back will say, “If we are not the Smith family, then what are we?”

Some time ago in a certain meeting I was asked, “Would you explain why you call yourselves the church in Los Angeles? Since the church in Los Angeles should include all the believers in Los Angeles, how can a small number there call themselves the church in Los Angeles?” I answered by saying that we all know that the church in a city includes all the saints in that city. But today’s situation is abnormal, and so many have left to join the different denominations. Now only a small number of us in Los Angeles realize that we must be in the local church and that we should not join any denomination. We realize that we are a small number, but if we do not call ourselves the church in Los Angeles, and yet we are in the city of Los Angeles, what should we call ourselves? The brother who asked the question nodded his head.

We realize that we are only three members of the Smith family, and we also realize that we cannot represent all the members of the Smith family; yet we are still here. If we are not the Smith family, then what are we? We have no other name but Smith. Some say that since we cannot represent the entire Smith family, we had better call ourselves the Smith Center. But what is this? Is this something according to its kind? There is not such a “kind” for us to be after. Genesis 1 tells us that in God’s creation all things are “according to their kind.” If we say that we are not the Smith family but the Smith Center, then we are not according to our kind.

Some think they should not call themselves the church in order to avoid trouble, but they do not realize that they cause more trouble than they avoid. What are we then? Are we the great Babylon? Are we the denominations or the free groups? Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! We are the local churches. If we do not admit it, we had better call ourselves a free group. Everything must be according to its kind. The hybrid of an apple and a peach cannot survive in the second generation. An apple must be an apple, and a peach must be a peach. God does not like anything of mixture. If you are the denominations or the free groups, you are the denominations or the free groups. If you are the local churches, then you are the local churches. There is no neutral ground. We all must be according to our kind.

## **ENDLESS DIVISION**

There is too much confusion today. Some say that today’s situation is so confused that no one can clarify it; therefore, we should not speak about the local church, for the more we do, the more trouble we will create. As long as we have two or three coming together in the name of the Lord, Matthew 18:20 tells us that the Lord is in our midst. This sounds very nice, but it simply causes more confusion. Suppose we have a group of brothers and sisters meeting together. If we say that two or three meeting together is all right, after a time some brothers will not feel happy meeting with us and will start another meeting of two or three on the next street. They will say that they are not divided from others but are one with all the Lord’s people. Then after a certain time, these brothers will have the same kind of experience, and some among them will start another meeting in another brother’s home. I think we can realize that this kind of division will be endless. Yet all these little groups claim that they are not narrow but open to everyone. Yet regardless of how

open they are, they are divided. Is this the way God ordained? If so, where is the impact, and where is the limitation?

God's way is very wise: it is the way of one church in one city. Whether you are happy with me or not, you must be one with me. Whether I like you or not, I must be one with you. There is no escape. We have to stay on the proper ground where we are to keep the unique oneness. In this way, our natural man is crossed out, and the church is built up.

### **THE STEPPINGSTONES**

There is one thing more. The local churches are also the present steppingstones to the New Jerusalem. I believe that all the local churches are today's entrances to the New Jerusalem. Could we get to the end without passing through the beginning? The local churches are in the first three chapters of Revelation, and the New Jerusalem is in the last two chapters. It is impossible to skip over the beginning. We must be in the local churches in order to be built up, to be disciplined, to learn the lessons, and to grow in life. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! He has shown us the local churches.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**THE LOCAL CHURCHES**  
**BEING FOR EATING AND DRINKING CHRIST**  
**THE STRANGE EMPHASIS IN REVELATION**

In the book of Revelation there is something very strange. In chapter 1, the emphasis is on the churches. John wrote to the seven churches which were in Asia (v. 4). The Lord Jesus told him that what he saw, he was to write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: “to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea” (v. 11). Seven churches equal seven cities; therefore, to one church means to one city, and to one city means to one church. This is the emphasis in chapter 1.

But in chapter 2 the emphasis is changed to eating. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to *eat* of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God” (v. 7). In the first of the seven epistles in this book, the promise is the promise of eating, and in the last one the promise is also of eating. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me” (3:20). Even in the middle epistle, the promise again has to do with eating. “To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna” (2:17). This is a special portion. It is something hidden, not like the manna in the wilderness, which was so open. Here the Lord promises the overcomers the hidden manna. So the strange thing in Revelation is this: the local churches are for eating. The more we eat, the happier we make the Lord.

Then chapter 7 tells us something of eternity. “They will not hunger anymore, neither will they thirst anymore, neither will the sun beat upon them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and guide them to springs of waters of life; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (vv. 16-17).

Some may think that to speak about eating and drinking is too shallow. “Why not speak about something deeper?” But the Lord Jesus does not like to speak about something deeper. He wants to speak about something *practical*. Nothing is so practical as eating and drinking. Nothing is so practical as something that will satisfy our hunger and thirst. The Lamb will feed them, so there will be no hunger and thirst. He will guide them to springs of waters of life. There will not only be one spring, for the Lord is not that poor. There will be many springs. There will not only be one water but many waters of life. “Springs of waters of life.” It is one life with many springs and many flowing waters.

The Lord says that He will shepherd them and guide them to the springs of waters of life. Then in chapter 21 He says that they have come to pass. What has come to pass is the preparation for eating and drinking. “They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely” (v. 6). Everything is ready for eating and drinking. It has come to pass. Just come and eat, come and drink.

Then the last chapter says, “He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (vv. 1-2). *Out of the throne of God and of the Lamb* means out of the throne of the Lamb-God. God is now the Lamb-God. He is the redeeming God, and out of His throne proceeds the river of water of life. Now it is not just a fountain but a river. A river is proceeding out of the redeeming God, and it is bright as crystal. What is the purpose of this river? It must be for us to drink. We all must drink of the river of water of life.

On the two sides of the river grows the tree of life. The water is for drinking, and the tree of life is for eating. O brothers, we must eat Christ, and we must drink Christ! We must enjoy Christ all the time by eating the tree of life and by drinking the river of life.

Finally, Revelation 22:17 says, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills

take the water of life freely.” The book of Revelation starts with the local churches, and it ends with eating and drinking.

## **THE CONSUMMATION OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES**

As I mentioned previously, at the time Revelation was written, the church was degraded. This was mostly due to teachings. Even at the end of the first century, history tells us that there were many different kinds of teachings in the church. Then the church became a religion. Do you know what a religion is? A religion is something with teachings, forms, and regulations, which tells people how to worship God. It was under this kind of degradation that the book of Revelation was written. That is why there is not much teaching in this book.

What do the twenty-two chapters of Revelation teach? The book of Romans gives the complete Christian life. First Corinthians teaches so many things about the church. But what does Revelation tell us? I would say that there is hardly any teaching in this book. It mainly tells us about the local churches, which eventually become the New Jerusalem.

The New Jerusalem will be the consummation of all the local churches. In the New Jerusalem is the tree of life, and in the first epistle to the first church of this book, the promise is that of eating of the tree of life. In the local churches there is the tree of life, and in the New Jerusalem also is the tree of life. This shows us that all the local churches will eventually become the New Jerusalem.

Between the local churches and the New Jerusalem, as we have seen, is the condemned world. It is revealed in chapters 4 through 16 that the whole world will be judged. God will exercise His divine judgment upon this condemned world. There is also the mixture of Babylon, which is revealed in chapter 17. The mysterious Babylon is a mixture of the church with the world; it is less of the church and more of the world. It is the world, but there is at least something of the church in it. In a sense it is the church, but there is much of the world in it. It is a mixture.

In Genesis 1 God says that everything must be according to its kind. If you are a man, you must be man. If you are a woman, you must be a woman. If it is a horse, it must be a horse. If it is a cow, it must be a cow. It cannot be part

cow and part horse. You cannot be part man and part woman. But Babylon is part church and part world. It is not according to its kind. This is today's Christianity. This is today's Christendom, and this Christendom has a mother which is the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church is the mother, and this mother has many daughters. I believe we all know who the daughters are.

The world will be judged, and great Babylon will be burnt. God will exercise His judgment even more upon great Babylon than on the world, because God hates the mixture. If you are the world, just be the world. If you are the church, just be the church. If you are a man, just be a man. If you are a woman, just be a woman. Do not make yourself part man and part woman. This is a monster. Christianity is a mixture, and this mixture will be wholly burnt. Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great! (Rev. 18:2), and all the saints will say, "Hallelujah!" (19:1-3).

There is no doctrinal teaching in the book of Revelation, no justification by faith, no sanctification, and no redemption. It emphatically tells us about the local churches and that the consummation of these local churches will be the New Jerusalem. But in the process, there is a long story. There is the divine judgment which will be exercised upon the condemned world, and the mixture of Babylon, which is today's Christianity, will be burnt.

### **"TO...TO...TO..."**

"What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches" (1:11). These seven churches are not the seven churches on the streets, on the campuses, in the homes, or in the factories. They are seven churches in seven cities. The seven churches are equal to seven cities.

We may think that the Lord did not compose Revelation 1:11 very well. I do not think that any one of us would compose this verse in such a way. "What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." The Lord composed it in this way. There are seven *to*'s. The Lord told John to send this book to the seven churches as follows: to, to, to, to, to, to, to. To what? To the local churches! He had to repeat all the names of the cities with so many *tos* and so many conjunctions so that we might see the local churches.

Can you have a church on your campus? If you think you can, you had better come back and see the *tos* of Revelation 1:11. The Lord Jesus will repeat them for you. “To the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna...” It is to the city, not to the campuses, or streets, or homes, or factories, or any denominations. It is to this city and to that city. Praise the Lord for His sevenfold repetition. This is entirely to show us that in one city there is, and should be, one church, and one church is, and should be, for one city. This is not my teaching but my quotation, and this quotation is from the spoken word of the Lord Jesus.

Where should the church be? Praise the Lord, it should be in the city! How many churches should there be in one city? It is abundantly clear that there should be only one. How many churches should many cities have? There should be one church for each city. Many cities should have many churches, but one city should have only one church. We must be clear about this matter. This is the last book in the Bible, and it is closed to so many Christians because they would not see the local churches. If we are willing to see the local churches, the whole book of Revelation will open to us because our position will be proper. Praise the Lord! When our position is proper, we can see.

“When I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands” (v. 12). It is so marvelous. When we turn, we see; we cannot say that we have not seen. I have been condemned by many people because of this matter of the local churches, but I cannot help it. I have seen. I cannot say that I have not seen. I am so burdened with the local churches because I have seen the local churches. I cannot help but be burdened, because I have seen.

We all need a turn. I am afraid that there are still some friends who are doubting. But these are not our words; these are the words spoken by the Lord. “What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.” There is no word in the entire Bible as clear as this word. One local church equals one city. The size, the jurisdiction, and the boundary of the local church must equal that of the city. Revelation 1:11 is exceedingly clear.

## **SIMPLY EATING AND DRINKING**

We must be in the local churches, and the Lord's intention in the local churches is simply for us to eat and drink. The Lord did not say that He would teach us or that He would instruct us. He said that He would give us something to eat. The local churches are a matter of eating. All the time we must be feeding on Christ. Our meeting hall is really our dining hall. Whenever we come together, we come to *eat*. "To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat."

What is the right condition of a local church? If it is full of teaching, it is wrong. The local churches must be full of eating. Whenever we come to the meeting, we should be nourished. Then after the meeting we will say, "Praise the Lord, I am filled and I am satisfied!"

If when we leave a meeting we say that we are clear, then we know that we have been taught and not fed. The first one who was clear was Eve. After tasting the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she was made clear. Formerly, in a sense, she did not know, but then she knew. This is awful! But I am sorry to say that this is the concept of today's Christianity. They try their best to help people to know and be more clear. But the more teaching people receive, the more fruit of the tree of knowledge they eat.

Every meeting of the local church must be full of Christ as food, and after every meeting we all must say, "Hallelujah, I am satisfied!" Though we do not know much, we are full. This is a proper local church. The local church is not a place for us to know but a place for us to eat. The local church is not a school but a dining room for heavenly eating. "To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life." The very tree of life in Genesis 2 which Adam lost is now opened to us in the local churches. The Lord told John to write to the church in Ephesus that he who overcomes will be given the tree of life to eat in the local churches. It is so clear that it is in the local churches where the Lord gives us something to eat.

In the last twenty years it has always been difficult for me to give a message of mere doctrine. This does not mean that I lack doctrines to give. But there is no anointing from the Lord to give such a message. When I speak, I must say something according to the inner anointing. The only burden that I have within is to help the Lord's children to know how to enjoy Christ by eating and drinking of Him.

We all must learn that the local churches are not places for teaching. They are places for eating. The local churches are places where the people of God can come together to eat and to drink of Christ. Christ is the tree of life, and He is also the hidden manna. Today's Christianity only knows Christ in a public way. They do not know a hidden Christ. The hidden Christ is in the local churches. Many times others have asked why we go to meetings all the time and what we do in these meetings. When we tell them that we go to the meetings to feed upon Christ, they simply cannot understand. This is because it is something hidden. This is Christ as the hidden manna. We all have eaten of this hidden manna in the local churches. We daily enjoy something which no one understands. Even if they come to our meetings, they still cannot understand. They only say that we are beside ourselves! We are satisfied, but they cannot enjoy it. It is something hidden. Praise the Lord! It is hidden, but we enjoy it.

So many of us who have been in Christianity and are now in the local churches have found a hidden enjoyment. This is not only the tree of life but also the hidden manna. This is the real enjoyment in the local churches. It is not only the tree of life and the hidden manna but also a feast. "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). Every meeting is not only a dining table but also a feast. We are not only eating, but we are also feasting on Christ.

Then when we get into eternity, the Lamb will shepherd us and guide us to springs of waters of life. It is not only one spring but springs of waters of life. Day by day we will drink of these springs. I believe we can understand this because we have enjoyed the foretaste in the local churches. The local churches should not be places for teachings. We should not care for teachings, but for eating and drinking of the Lord Jesus.

As we have seen, in the New Jerusalem there is a river of water of life flowing out of the throne of the redeeming God. In the flowing of the living water, on both sides of the river, grows the tree of life. This is for us to eat for eternity. Our duty is simply to eat and drink. We will do nothing but enjoy Christ as the living water and as the tree of life.

Praise the Lord, we have nothing to do with the world, and we have nothing to do with Babylon. Our only concern is to enjoy Christ and to feed on Him in the local churches. Here we enjoy Christ, here we minister Christ, here we eat

Christ, and here we drink Christ. Hallelujah, eventually we will feast in the New Jerusalem! But today we have a real foretaste in the local churches.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE BURNING FIRE AND THE FLOWING WATER**

Revelation is the last book in the Bible and the last book to the church. We have seen clearly that this book is from the seven Spirits to the local churches. There is no doctrine in this book. It is a long book with twenty-two chapters, yet there is no doctrine. What then is this book about? It is a book about the local churches: “John to the seven churches which are in Asia” (1:4a).

In this book for the local churches, the Spirit of God is the seven Spirits before the throne. “Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne” (v. 4b). Here the sevenfold intensified Spirit is now in the second place of the Triune God. He was in the third place (Matt. 28:19), but now in this book He is in the second place, because the age has been changed. The Lord has turned the age from doctrine to the Spirit. So there is no doctrine in this book, but the seven Spirits. If we have the seven Spirits, we have everything; if we do not have the seven Spirits, we have nothing.

### **TWO THINGS FROM THE THRONE**

The seven Spirits are before the throne. Revelation speaks of the throne a number of times. The first occurrence is in 1:4 as we have seen in the above quotation. Then 4:5 says, “Out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” The last is in 22:1: “He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” It is so clear that there are two things that come from the throne of God: one is the burning fire, and the other is the flowing water. There is no doctrine in this book, but there are the fire and the water. The fire is the seven Spirits of God. The seven Spirits of God are the seven lamps of burning fire. What then is the water? To see this we must turn to the Gospel of the same writer. In John’s Gospel we are told that the water is also the Spirit. “He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit” (7:38-39). The same Spirit is both the burning fire and the flowing water. Again I say that there is no doctrine in this book. When we come to this book, we only meet

the throne with the fire and the water. The fire is to burn us, and the water is to supply us. On one hand, we need to be burned, and on the other, we need to be supplied and watered.

## **THE BURNING FIRE**

In these chapters we have been much occupied with the matter of the local churches. The local churches should not be full of doctrines, but full of burning. Doctrines only stir up different opinions. If a local church is a genuine, proper, normal, and living one, there will be more burning than doctrines. When we turn and touch the throne of God, we are burned. O brothers and sisters, how much have you been burned? If you say that in the local church here you have received many new teachings, I will be disappointed. But if so many of you say, “Praise the Lord, I have been burned here!” I will be so happy. We all must be burned. Our opinions must be burned, our different concepts must be burned, and our doctrines and knowledge must all be burned. The local church must be a burning place. The more we are in the local church, the more we should be burned.

When I was saved, I attended the meetings of a very strict Brethren group. It seemed that they knew the Bible extensively, so I spent more than seven years with them and received much knowledge. Then in 1933 the Lord brought me to the local church in Shanghai. When I attended the meetings of the church there, I felt ashamed of my dead knowledge. After a few months in the local church, all my dead knowledge was burned away. The more I attended the meetings, the more I was burned. The local church must be such a refining place. Regardless of what we know and what we are, we all must be refined by the burning fire in the local church.

Last year, when a group from some of the local churches in this country was in Taipei, some asked how many who were taking the trip were at one time preachers, ministers, and missionaries. I believe that over thirty arose. We all realized that the most difficult people to deal with in the local church are of this type. But praise the Lord! Though we have so many preachers, ministers, and missionaries among us, we do not have problems. All the problems have been burned away in the local church.

The more we touch the local church, the more we will be burned. All the old doctrines, the old backgrounds, and every kind of oldness will be burned away.

In the book of Revelation, the fire comes before the water, because at that time the church was degraded. Many negative things had come in, and all of these had to be burned away. Teachings can never do this. Only the burning of the seven Spirits can accomplish it. The Spirit is the sevenfold Spirit in the local churches to do a burning work. The more we touch the throne, the more we will be burned. The more we say, "O Lord," the more we will be burned. The more we say, "Amen," the more we will be burned, and the more we say, "Hallelujah," the more we will be burned. To be burned simply means to be rid of all the old things. If we will call, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" we will sense that we are rid of something. After a few days we will look back and be disgusted with all the old things we used to admire. That is the burning.

## **THE LIVING WATER**

On the negative side we are burned, but praise the Lord, on the positive side we are being watered. Something new, refreshing, strengthening, and enlightening waters us within. There are no human words which can explain what is within us. It is like rivers of living water, as John mentions in his Gospel.

If we really mean business with the Lord when we say, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah," there will be something flowing within. Sometimes it is a river of comfort, sometimes it is a river of love, sometimes it is a river of humility, sometimes it is a river of patience, and sometimes it is a river of strength. Even when we are in a kind of darkness, if we will just say, "O Lord!" the light will shine. That is the river of light flowing. This is not teaching. Sometimes there is a river of rebuke within us when we say, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah." Something within tells us that something is wrong. There is no need for someone to rebuke us outwardly; there is an inward rebuke. This is the flow of the seven Spirits of God.

The age has been changed. The Lord will never honor mere doctrines. The Lord has turned the age from the doctrines to the seven Spirits. What we need is not the doctrines but the burning and the watering of the sevenfold Spirit. Doctrines do not work so well. This is why there is no doctrine in the book of Revelation. Instead, there are the seven Spirits of God as the lamps of burning fire and the river of living water. When we say, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah," we touch the throne, and something within burns and waters us.

Whenever I say, “O Lord Jesus,” I really enjoy the Lord. It is even better than reading a passage of the Bible. To say, “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah” a few times is so refreshing. This is the watering of the seven Spirits of God.

## **TOUCHING THE THRONE**

We need to continually touch the throne. Do not think that the throne is so far away. In a sense it is in the heavens, but in another sense it is within us. Hebrews 4:16 says, “Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.” Where is the throne of grace? It is within our spirit. We must open our spirit and say, “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!” Then we will be burned and watered. It is marvelous.

It is very interesting how the Lord gave us these four words: *O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah*. In one of the Lord’s Day morning meetings in January 1968, I told the brothers and sisters that they all had to function and say something in the meetings. Then I said that everyone could at least say four words. But I did not know what the four words were. I was surprised at what I had said and thought to myself, “What are the four words?” Then I said, “The four words are: number one *O*, number two *Lord*, number three *Amen*, and number four *Hallelujah*!” These four words simply came in this way. Do not think that before I spoke I had some kind of consideration regarding these four words. No, I did not have these four words before I spoke that morning. But these four words spontaneously came out: *O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah*!

We will never know how much these four words have helped the brothers and sisters, not only in the United States but also in the Far East. While we were visiting Taiwan, wherever we went, we mentioned these four words, and the enjoyment and power we had was much better than that of any kind of message.

Suppose that in the meetings of the local church we did not do anything but say, “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!” If the Lord were to lead us to do this for two hours, I believe we would all be set on fire. Everyone would be burned. This is much, much better than any kind of prevailing message. Why is this? It is because when we say these four words, we are touching the seven Spirits of God which are before the throne. Try it and see if the seven Spirits will not burn you.

I want to say something about a brother who was caught by the Lord here. He is a young man from San Francisco. At the time the Lord caught him, he was a hippy and a boyfriend of a young sister in San Francisco. At the winter conference of 1968, this young sister came to Los Angeles, and this hippy boyfriend came also. But before he came, he made up his mind not to respond. Then in one of the meetings we all suddenly stood up and clapped our hands with singing. Before that time we had not clapped our hands, but in that meeting we all clapped our hands. He was standing in the meeting but said to himself that he would never clap his hands. After a short while, however, he started to clap his hands. He told us that once he clapped his hands, he was caught by the Lord. Immediately after he clapped his hands, he was caught by the seven Spirits of God. He was set on fire, and when he returned to San Francisco, there was a real transformation. He cut off his beard and his long hair. There was such a change within him that he influenced his parents. How was he caught by the Lord? It was not by preaching or teaching. It was just by touching the Spirit through calling on the Lord. This is really wonderful.

We have seen that to reach the unbelievers, no preaching is necessary. If we help them to say “O Lord” three times, they will be saved. If they open the window, the air will get in. All they have to do is to open their mouth and say, “O Lord, O Lord.” Even if they have no intention of believing, still they will be caught. Regardless of whether they have the intention or not, as long as they open the window, the air will get in. It is not a matter of teaching; it is a matter of touching the seven Spirits of God.

## **NO FORMS OR REGULATIONS**

The book of Revelation also has no forms or regulations. Can you find any regulations or forms in this book? I cannot find any, but I can find, “Amen, Hallelujah!” “The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who sits upon the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah! And a voice came out from the throne, saying, Praise our God, all His slaves and those who fear Him, the small and the great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah!” (19:4-6).

You may say that this is something which takes place in the heavens. But we need it on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). However, even this is not a

regulation. Sometimes the seven Spirits will lead us to be silent, and at other times the seven Spirits will lead us to shout. We have no regulations.

In the last book of the Bible there are no doctrines, no forms, and no regulations for the local churches. Praise the Lord! There are only the seven Spirits of God. This is all we need. If we come to the throne of God and say, “O Lord, O Lord, O Lord,” the seven Spirits of God will burn and flow within us.

Today is the day of the seven Spirits. Do not talk anymore about doctrines or you will be killed. The letter kills. Knowledge kills. Doctrine kills. Teaching kills. All the written code kills. The word of the Bible must not be the letters but the Spirit. The Lord said, “The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (John 6:63). It must not be the knowledge, the doctrines, or the teachings. It must be the Spirit, and even more, the seven Spirits. Let us all open ourselves to the Spirit to be really burned and watered so that the Lord may have a free way among us in the local churches.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **THE CHRIST IN REVELATION**

In this chapter we must see something of Christ in Revelation. Christ in this book is quite different from all the other books of the Bible. Let us read Revelation 1:13-16. “In the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And His head and hair were as white as white wool, as snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet were like shining bronze, as having been fired in a furnace; and His voice was like the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword; and His face shone as the sun shines in its power.”

### **WALKING IN THE MIDST OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES**

In the verses above Christ is the man walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. We know that these golden lampstands are the local churches. This reveals that today Christ is the Son of Man walking in the midst of the local churches. We may have been Christians for years but did not realize that Christ today is the glorious man walking in the midst of the local churches. He is walking in the midst of the golden lampstands, and the golden lampstands are the local churches.

If we want Him to walk in our midst, we must be in the local church. If we are in the denominations, we are still in captivity. In the midst of the local churches, Christ is walking. We must not think that it is a small thing to be in the local churches. Christ as the glorified man is walking in their midst. This is the greatest reward for us in the local church. For more than thirty-six years I have enjoyed His precious walking in the midst. The first point in this book about Christ is that He is walking. He is not walking in the denominations or in any organizations. He is walking in the midst of the local churches.

If we would have Christ walking in the United States, we must have a good number of local churches in this country. To have Christ walking in the Northwest, there must be a number of local churches there. To have Christ

walking in California, there must be the local churches there. Praise the Lord! Where the local churches are, there Christ is walking in the midst.

To have Christ walking in our midst is not a small matter. Suppose tonight we were to have the president of the United States walking in our midst. That would indeed be exciting. But he is just the president and nothing to compare with Christ. To have Christ walking in our midst is inexpressibly glorious!

Now we realize how precious is the book of Revelation. This book tells us that Christ today is walking in the midst of the local churches.

### **THE LOVING HIGH PRIEST**

Revelation continues to tell us what kind of a Christ He is. He is a Christ who is so perfect: He is wearing a long garment down to His feet. Nothing is short or lacking; nothing is needed. He is perfect. The garment in the Bible always signifies what a person is and what he does. Christ wears a perfect garment, and we know that this is the perfect robe of the high priest. He is walking in the midst of the local churches as the High Priest. He brings the local churches into the priesthood. He is walking in our midst not as a general in the army, or as a king, but as the High Priest in a perfect robe.

It is indeed interesting to notice that as the High Priest, Christ does not gird His loins, but His breast. This means that His work has been accomplished. His work is past, but His concern and His love still remain. The girdle is not now upon His loins but upon His breast. His work is over, but His loving concern still abides for the local churches. His concern is a concern of love—this is why He girds His breast. He has finished His work, but He is so concerned in love for all the local churches.

### **THE ANCIENT, LIVING ONE**

This book also tells us that Christ is the ancient One, for His hair is exceedingly white. White hair, humanly speaking, always signifies oldness, but here it signifies that Christ is the ancient One. No one is as ancient as He. But this does not mean that He is old. He is ancient, yet He is so living. “I am...the living One” (1:17-18).

The older we are, the more living we must be. We, the older ones, must be more living. Christ is the most ancient One, yet He is the most living One. He is living forever and ever. He is ancient, and He is living.

I have known some local churches who were very living when they first began to meet, but after two or three years they became old. This is wrong. The older a church is, the more living it must be. The church must be as Christ, the Head. He is the oldest, the most ancient, yet He is the most living. I hope that as the church in Los Angeles grows older, it will also become more and more living.

The local churches should not be dead. This is why the Lord Jesus spoke in the way He did to the church in Sardis. He told them that He was the One who has the seven Spirits; therefore, they should not be so dead. There was nothing wrong with the church in Sardis except that she was dead. She had a name that she was living, but in fact she was dead. This is wrong. In Sardis was a dead local church, yet Christ is so living. This means that she had lost her contact with the living Christ.

## **THE BURNING CHRIST**

Then we read that the Christ in Revelation has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like shining bronze, as having been fired in a furnace. All this means that He is burning. He is ancient, He is living, and He is burning. In the local churches there should be no coldness or lukewarmness, because Christ is the burning One. He is not only living, but He is also burning.

Would we be willing to pray-read for fifteen minutes and allow Christ to look upon us with His burning eyes? We must remember that He has seven eyes. Revelation 5:6 tells us that His seven eyes are the seven Spirits of God. The seven Spirits of God are like seven lamps of burning fire (4:5). If we allow these seven eyes to look upon us, surely we will be burned. If we can pray-read for fifteen minutes and yet be cold, our pray-reading must be wrong. There must be some kind of insulation, insulating us from within; otherwise, we will be burned. Christ is not only living, but He is also burning. We all must be burning. Do not speak to me too much; otherwise, you will be burned. I am burning. Every member in the local churches must be so burning.

When we are burned and burning, we are not always so clear. The coldest people are the clearest ones. When we are cold, we will have an exceedingly clear mind. But when we are burning, we are somewhat foolish. Praise the Lord! We must not try to be so clear. We need to be a little foolish, because we are burning.

Christ is the One who is walking in the midst of the local churches, and He is the High Priest whose work is accomplished but who has a concern of love for the local churches. He is also the One who is so ancient, so living, and so burning.

Suppose Christ were here today with His seven burning eyes and His feet like shining bronze, as having been fired in a furnace. Would we dare to contact Him? In the local church Christ is walking in the midst as such a burning One.

### **THE SOUND OF MANY WATERS**

There is something more. Christ is not so silent. He was somewhat silent when He was walking upon this earth, but today He is different. Today He is in the local churches with a voice as the sound of many waters. We all must be living and speaking. We are not serving a silent Christ, but One with a voice like the sound of many waters. When we come together in the local churches, we need to have the sound of many waters. In the local churches Christ is not so silent. We must be filled with Him; then our praises will be just like the sound of many waters. “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!” We need to be noisy, because the very Christ who is within us and who is walking in our midst is a Christ with a loud voice. Those in Christianity may say that this is extreme, but the Lord is going to revolutionize Christianity. He is even going to revolutionize our meetings. There is no need for us to keep the old way. There must be something new and living all the time.

### **THE FIERCE CHRIST**

The first chapter of Revelation is absolutely different from the first chapter of John. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This is really good. But I also admire the first chapter of Revelation, for it tells us something about a Christ who is not so gentle but so fierce. Look at the picture of Christ in this chapter. His eyes

are like a flame of fire, His feet are like shining bronze, as having been fired in a furnace, and His voice is like the sound of many waters. At the end of the age the Lord must be fierce. This is because the days are so dark, so evil, and so dead. We need something fierce. Dead Christianity needs a fierce Christ.

If you exercise your mind to read the Bible day by day, you will be so cold and so silent. But if you would forget your mind and contact the living Christ who is walking in the midst of the local churches, you will be burning. Why are you so silent? It is because you read too much. Why are you so silent? It is because you never say, “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!” If you try, you will see. You will be burned, and you will jump up and shout. You can never be so silent if you contact the Christ in Revelation. Something will burn within you. This is the way Christ is today in the local churches.

We must not bring our past impression of Christ into the local churches. We must have a new impression of Christ. The Christ who is walking in the midst of the local churches is very ancient, yet so living and burning. He has seven burning eyes, His feet are like shining bronze, as having been fired in a furnace, and His voice is like the sound of many waters. This is absolutely different from the impression of Christ we received in Christianity. Praise the Lord that we have seen such a Christ!

### **THE SEVEN SPIRITS FOR THE SEVEN STARS**

In Revelation 2:1 the Lord says, “These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.” The seven stars are the leading ones in the local churches. The Lord today is holding the leading ones. He is walking in the midst of the local churches, and He is holding the leading ones.

Then Revelation 3:1 tells us that He is not only holding the leading ones, but He also has the seven Spirits. “These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.” The seven Spirits are not only for the seven churches but also for the leaders of the local churches. All the leading ones of the local churches must be burning with the seven Spirits.

### **THE OPEN DOOR**

Revelation also tells us that Christ has the keys of David. When He opens, no one can shut, and when He shuts, no one can open. “These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens” (v. 7). The Lord sets before the local churches an open door. I can testify that in the past years the enemy has tried his best to shut the doors to us. But the more he has tried, the more the doors have been opened. The local churches are His testimony. Who can shut them? The key of David is in His hand.

### **THE AMEN AND THE WORTHY ONE**

In Revelation 3:14 Christ is the Amen. “These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” When we say, “O Lord, Amen,” we are simply calling on His name. *Jah*, the last syllable of *Hallelujah*, is also the name of the Lord. *Jah* means “Jehovah,” and *hallelu* means “praise.” So *Hallelujah* means “praise the Lord.” Therefore, *O Lord, Amen*, and *Hallelujah* are all filled with the titles of the Lord. He is the Lord, the Amen, and Jah. “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!”

Revelation also tells us that the Lord is the worthy One. “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created...And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals? And no one in heaven nor on the earth nor under the earth was able to open the scroll or look into it. And I wept much because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look into it. And one of the elders said to me, Do not weep; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so that He may open the scroll and its seven seals. And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” (4:11; 5:2-6).

There is none in heaven or in earth or under the earth as worthy as Christ. His worthiness is realized in the local churches. We must not forget that this is a book to the local churches. His worthiness is not revealed in other books; it is only in this one to the local churches. This means His worthiness is to be realized in the local churches. One day, throughout the whole United States, so many local churches will be built up. That will be the time when the

worthiness of Christ will be revealed. In Christianity the worthiness of Christ can never be shown. The more we are built up in the local churches, the more Christ will be manifested as the worthy One.

To the enemy He is the Lion, and to us He is the Lamb. “Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome.” So He is worthy. John came to see the Lion, but he saw a Lamb. To the enemy He is a prevailing Lion, but to us He is the redeeming Lamb. Praise the Lord!

## **THE FIGHTING CHRIST**

Finally, in Revelation 19 we see that Christ is riding on a white horse for the battle. “I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war...And the armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean” (vv. 11, 14).

This Christ in the local churches is eventually the fighting Christ, riding on a white horse, and we are His followers. We are the heavenly army to fight the battle with Him for the heavenly kingdom.

This is the Christ in Revelation. May the Lord give us the vision to see this Christ in the local churches, a Christ who is absolutely different from the Christ in Christianity.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CHRIST'S REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES**

We have seen in the last chapter that Christ in Revelation is different. Now we must see from Revelation how the local churches in the Lord's recovery are also different. After reading the epistles to the seven local churches, we realize that the Lord's speaking here is very different from His speaking in the Epistles written by the apostle Paul. I believe our situation today is just like that mentioned in these seven epistles. In other words, what the Lord speaks in these epistles exactly fits our present situation. These epistles were written to churches in a state of degradation, and the churches today are, no doubt, also in degradation. So all of these epistles suit our situation.

If we want to know what the local churches should be like in the Lord's recovery during the time of degradation, we must see what the Lord demands and requires in these seven epistles. We do not have time to see every detail, but we can see the main points.

#### **LOVING THE LORD FIRST**

In the first epistle, the one to Ephesus, the Lord requires in His recovery of the local churches *the first love*. The Lord says, "I know your works and your labor and your endurance and that you cannot bear evil men; and you have tried those who call themselves apostles and are not, and have found them to be false; and you have endurance and have borne all things because of My name and have not grown weary. But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love...To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life" (2:2-4, 7).

The Lord tells this church that they have the works, the labor, and many good things, but they have left the first love. The word *first* in Greek means first not only in time or order but also in quality or nature. The same word is translated as "best" in the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. The father ordered the *best* robe for him. That is the first robe, not only first in sequence but also best in quality.

The Lord demands of His local churches not only the first love but also the best love. He wants the love which is first in quality and nature. If when others come to our meetings, they only realize that we are doing many things for the Lord, but do not sense that we render the best love to the Lord, then we are a failure. What people must sense in our meetings is that we love the Lord first and best. We should not care too much for works or labor or for any other thing. We must only care for the first and best love to the Lord. There must be a sense among us that the Lord Jesus is so lovable, so dear, and so precious. Whenever we mention His name, our heart should feel so responsive.

This is the first requirement of the local churches in the Lord's recovery. Do not think that we need to do a multitude of things for Him. He does not require that. What He requires is the first and best love toward Him. Do we love the Lord with the first love and the best love? Could we say that we love the Lord Jesus more than all our family? We must be able to say this. We must say to our wives, "I love you because you love Jesus." Then we will all love one another because we all love Jesus.

As the years go by, we should love the Lord more dearly. Nothing should be more sweet to us than the Lord Jesus. We should love the church, but we should not love it as much as we love the Lord Jesus. He must be our first and best love.

It is by this love that we are the lampstand. If we lose this love, the Lord Jesus will remove the lampstand. This means that if we lose our love, we will lose the lampstand. So the more we love the Lord Jesus, the more we will be shining, and the more we will enjoy Him as the tree of life. To be the lampstand and to enjoy the Lord as the tree of life requires the best love toward the Lord, a love which surpasses all other things. We must have the first love, the best love, the most pure love toward the Lord Jesus. Then we will be the living lampstand, and we will be qualified to enjoy Him as the tree of life. Love, light, and life all go together. If we have the first love and the best love toward the Lord Jesus, we will be a shining lampstand, and we will enjoy the Lord Jesus as the tree of life. This is the first requirement.

## **BEING FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH**

In the second epistle, the one to Smyrna, the Lord speaks of persecution. “I know your tribulation and poverty (but you are rich) and the slander from those who call themselves Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison that you may be tried, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:9-10).

The more we love the Lord Jesus, the more we will be persecuted. This persecution does not come from the Gentile, heathen, world, but from synagogues. A synagogue is a place where people worship God. The persecution to the lovers of Jesus is not from the heathen world but from the religious people of a synagogue system. This is the synagogue of Satan. If we only love Jesus and do not care for anything religious, we will surely be persecuted by the synagogue of Satan.

For over forty years I have suffered persecution after persecution but not from the heathen world. The persecutions I have suffered have come from so-called Christianity, because I simply hate all religious things. If we mean business with the Lord for the local churches and love Him more than everything else, we will suffer persecution and many evil reports.

In some of our conference meetings I have said that it is unnecessary for us to say *formally* at the end of our prayers “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Of course, we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, but there is no need to put such a term at the end of our prayers in a *formal way*. But some have said that I tell people that there is no need to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus. They even publish these things in their papers. So we must be ready to be persecuted if we love the Lord and hate the system of religion.

From this epistle we can see that the second requirement of the Lord for the local churches is that under persecution they be faithful unto death. If we are faithful to the Lord as a pure lover of Jesus alone, we must be ready to suffer persecution. But, praise the Lord, the suffering of persecution is another sign that we are the local churches. The local churches must suffer persecution, because they can never go along with anything of the system of religion. Why does the synagogue of Satan persecute the lovers of Jesus? It is simply because the lovers of Jesus will not go along with their religious things. Under this kind of persecution, the Lord requires us to be faithful unto death.

## **HATING THE TEACHINGS OF BALAAM AND THE NICOLAITANS**

The third epistle was written to Pergamos, and the Lord mainly dealt with two things: the teaching of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans. “I have a few things against you, that you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices and to commit fornication. In the same way you also have some who hold in like manner the teaching of the Nicolaitans” (vv. 14-15).

We all know who Balaam was. He was a prophet but not in a good sense. He was a prophet who for money was hired to speak the word of God. He was hired to say something for God. At first, this was a deed, but eventually a teaching was produced out of it. Thus, there is the teaching of Balaam. In today's Christianity there is still this teaching of Balaam with the system of hired preachers, ministers, or pastors to speak the word of God. Balaam was a prophet who was hired to speak something for God. We should never have this in the local churches.

In past years on the mainland of China, many so-called gifted Christian brothers came to contact Brother Watchman Nee. More or less, they tried to make a deal to see what position they could obtain among us. Sometimes they asked frankly, “Brother Nee, if I leave the denomination and turn this way, what kind of position will I receive?” Brother Nee answered, “I do not even know what my position is. I would even ask you what position would you give me?” This happened not only once but several times. You could not say that they did not see the way. They saw something, but they wanted a position.

In the local churches we all must hate the teaching of hired prophets. Why is it that many so-called servants of the Lord dare not speak frankly? It is because of their job. They must play the part of worldly Balaam, because the money is in the hands of Balak. They must say something to please him. This brings in spiritual fornication and idolatry. If we trace the history of today's Christianity, we will see why so much spiritual fornication and so many idols have been brought in. It is simply because of the hired prophets having to please the Balaks who hold the money. If money becomes an influence in the local church, the church is gone.

By His mercy the church here in Los Angeles can boast to the whole universe that we never talk about money. To talk about money is simply to hold the teaching of Balaam.

Pergamos also had the teaching of the Nicolaitans. This word, according to the Greek, is a compound word. *Nico* is the first word, and *laitans* is the second. *Laitans* is of the same root as that of *laity*, which means “the ordinary, common people.” *Nico* means “to subdue, to conquer, or to rule over.” Therefore, *Nicolaitans* means “to conquer the common people.” In Christianity some have become the conquerors, and the majority have become the laity. This is today’s system of the clergy and the laity. In the local churches we do not have any clergy, and we do not have any laity. We must hate both. We are all priests in the local church. We must not bring this satanic system into the local churches.

The clergy-laity system is a religious system. It is so easy to be religious, to organize a Christian church and hire some professionals who have graduated from Bible institutes or seminaries. They are professional. They have the education to do the job. It is quite scientific, because today in the twentieth century, everyone must be professional. An electrician is professional, a lawyer is professional, a medical doctor is professional, and a pastor is also professional. This is abominable in the eyes of God.

Six years ago I was told that it would be rather difficult for every Christian to function in the church, because it must be something professional. This is satanic! Many people say, “We must work five days a week, but the weekend is the time for rest. That is the time for the preachers to do their job.” It sounds logical, but it is really satanic. This paralyzes the Body of Christ and kills the functions of the members of the Body.

Could my two hands say to my body, “Because we work five days a week, we need a time to relax during the weekends. The weekend is the time for the mouth to do his work”? When I am speaking with my mouth, I still need my two hands. The whole Body is meeting in the local church, not just the mouth. The church is not an organization of any society or of any kind of religion. The church is the organic Body of Christ. Everyone must function in a living way. If we are in the local church and for the local church, we must function. There is no excuse. We must chase away the satanic system of the clergy and the laity by functioning as members of the Body of Christ.

When a group of us went to the Far East in 1968, nearly all the functioning ones left for this trip. Many wondered what would happen to the church in Los Angeles, but I said, “Do not worry. If they function, they just function. If they do not function, just close the door.” So we went, and, praise the Lord, we received some letters in Taiwan saying that the meetings in Los Angeles were even more living. Everyone was functioning. This then is the local church.

All the brothers and sisters are priests of God and members of Christ. So in the local church everyone serves and functions. The local church has no laity and no clergy. We all function and serve together as members of Christ and priests of God. We must hate these two kinds of teachings: the teaching of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans. What we must have in the local church is the life of Christ ministered by the priesthood.

I am so grateful and thankful to the Lord for the situation here in the local church in Los Angeles. There are so many serving ones. We do not like to have any churchgoers, those who only come to attend the eleven o’clock service on Sunday. We all must be the practical serving and functioning ones. Praise the Lord! We have a good coordination among us in the church. Everyone functions and serves. We not only function in the meetings, but we all serve in many different aspects. This is the local church.

## **BEING SEPARATED FROM THE WORLD AND IDOLS**

The fourth epistle is to Thyatira, in which fornication and idols are dealt with. “I have something against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and leads My slaves astray to commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices” (v. 20).

Spiritual fornication is the union of the church with the world. Whenever the church is united to the world, that is a kind of spiritual fornication. The church has nothing to do with the world and must be absolutely separated from the world. The world is the world, and the church is the church. These are two realms, but Christianity has married them. This is fornication in the eyes of God. The church must have nothing to do with any worldly thing. A local church must be so pure, so utterly separated from worldliness.

Worldliness is always related to idols. If we are united to the world, we spontaneously have idols. The local churches should not have any kind of idols. An idol is simply a substitute of God. Anything that replaces God and possesses man is an idol. Nothing should ever be allowed to replace God in the local churches. We should never have anything that possesses us. Our only Possessor must be God Himself. Our relationship must only be with God; otherwise, we will bring in fornication and idolatry. The local churches must be so pure and separated from the world and idols.

### **BEING LIVING RATHER THAN DEAD**

In the fifth epistle, the one to Sardis, the Lord did not rebuke the church for anything wrong. There was nothing wrong, but she was dead. To be dead is more serious than to be wrong.

Allow me to illustrate in this way. Suppose there is a little boy in this hall who is very naughty and wrong in every aspect. But there is also another boy in the hall who is dead. There is nothing wrong with him, for he is adjusted and fully corrected. Which one would you prefer? Would you like to contact the naughty boy or the dead one? Of course, we all would prefer the living one, even though he is wrong.

The Lord hates dead things. He told Sardis, “I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead. Become watchful and establish the things which remain, which were about to die; for I have found none of your works completed before My God” (3:1-2).

I am afraid that in some of the churches, things are about to die. Their meeting is dead; their prayer is dying; everything is about to die. It is a dreadful situation. If we only have a moral mentality to know what is right and what is wrong, this proves that we do not have the sense of life. God is not a God of the dead. He is a God of the living. A local church must be living, even if it is wrong. Of course, I do not encourage anyone to be wrong, but we must be living.

Leviticus 11 tells us several times that whenever someone touches something which is dead, he is dirty. This dirtiness cannot be cleansed only by water. A certain amount of time is also required for the cleansing. Therefore, to be dirty with deadness is more serious than to be dirty with sinfulness.

There are some who come to the meetings in the local church who are dead. If you touch them, you just touch deadness. I believe we all have had this experience. We must be careful with this kind of person. He is not a living person but a dead one; therefore, we must flee from him. We should run away not only from sinful things but especially from deadening things. Sometimes the things that come from the mouths of some people are just like a dead carcass. Their talk is just like dead bodies. We must not listen to this kind of talk. If we do, we simply touch death. Then for one week, sometimes, we are not able to praise. Sometimes we are even poisoned unto death. We must not be another Sardis. Every church must be living and alive. We must not try to be so right, but so living.

Many, many times in the so-called Christian churches, people are religiously dead. They are dead with religion. Many satanic things in so-called Christianity simply make people religiously dead. When you come to the meeting and have a burden from the Lord to utter something, the religious death says that you should not say anything, but keep yourself quiet. This is a kind of religious killing. I do not encourage you to be mad and to jump and dance. I do not care for that. But we must not be bound by any kind of religion. Sometimes when we come to the meeting, we are so filled with the joy of the Lord that we have to shout, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah!" But simply due to the religious custom we received from our background, we will not shout because we think we should not. This is something religious that kills us. We must not keep any religious customs. Religion kills, and religion is something old. Anything old will soon be dead. We must not make our meetings religious. We all must be very living, keeping ourselves open to the Spirit.

### **HAVING BROTHERLY LOVE**

The sixth epistle is to Philadelphia, the name of which means "brotherly love." In the local churches we need the Philadelphia, we need the love for one another. We love one another because we love the Lord. We need the brotherly love, for in this love we have the open door. The Lord said to Philadelphia, "I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name" (Rev. 3:8).

In a prevailing local church, the door is always wide open, because the brothers love one another. As long as the brothers and sisters love each other,

the door can never be shut. The more we love one another, the more the doors will be opened. If we invite friends to come, it is unnecessary to preach to them; we simply let them see the love that we have with oneness and harmony. This alone will convince them. There is no need for us to preach the gospel to them. They are convinced already.

The way to open the door is to love one another. The open door is set before Philadelphia. If we would have an open door, we must love one another. This will convince the whole world.

### **BEING HOT RATHER THAN LUKEWARM**

Finally, we come to the last epistle, which is to Laodicea. We all know what is mentioned in this epistle. The church was lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. The Lord said to her, “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth” (vv. 15-16).

Why was the church in Laodicea so lukewarm? It is simply because she was too much in the mind. If Christians are lukewarm, it is certain that they are too much in the mind. They have too many doctrines and too much knowledge. Romans 12:11 tells us the only way to keep from being lukewarm: “Be burning in spirit.” We must forget about our mind and turn to the spirit and say, “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!” If we will say this for half an hour, we will be burned. Then we will never be lukewarm anymore. We must forget about the teachings and doctrines as well as our clear and clever mind. We need to be burned in our spirit!

In Sardis the Lord promised the overcomers the reward of white garments: “He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments” (Rev. 3:5). He says the same thing to the church in Laodicea: “I counsel you to buy from Me...white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested” (v. 18).

What are these white garments? They are livingness. To be alive, to be living, is the white garments. If we are dead, we are dirty. A dead person is the dirtiest one. If we are dead, we are also naked. We need some livingness to cover us. Brothers and sisters, we all need the *living* garments. The living

garments are Christ Himself, wrought into us by the living Spirit. The only way to have these garments is to turn ourselves to the spirit. Then we will be burned and really hot—livingly hot.

From these seven epistles I believe that we have seen what a local church in the Lord's recovery ought to be.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### REVELATION BEING A BOOK OF LIFE

Have you ever realized that Revelation is a book of life? A good number of books have been written as expositions of this book, but most of them are written along the line of prophecy. But the Lord has shown us that this is a book of life, not only of prophecy.

*Tree of life* is mentioned four times in this book. *Water of life* is mentioned four times also, three times in the singular and once in the plural. *Book of life* is used three times, and *crown of life* is also mentioned. The Lord Jesus also declared in this book, “I am...the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever” (1:17-18). Revelation, as the last book of the Bible, is a book of life. This is because in the very beginning of the Bible, the central theme is also life (Gen. 2:9).

### A RECORD OF LIFE

The record of God’s creation in Genesis 1—2, strictly speaking, is not a record of creation but a record of life. If it were really a record of creation, it would not be so short. Only one verse is the record of creation, and that is the first verse of chapter 1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This is the record of creation. Then from Genesis 1:2 to the end of chapter 2, it is entirely a record of life.

According to the Hebrew text, Genesis 1:2 must be rendered in this way: “But the earth *became* waste and emptiness.” “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. But the earth *became* waste and emptiness.” This means that the earth *became* full of death, and upon the surface of the earth was the darkness of the deep. The deep and the darkness signify death. The Spirit of God then came in, not to create but to recover by life. Following the coming of the Spirit of God, light came. The light was not for creation but for life. Light came in to separate the darkness from the light. This was for producing life.

The first day, light came in for the producing of life. Then an expanse came in to separate the waters above from the waters beneath. This again is for the

producing of life. The expanse is air. Without air, life is impossible. Light is for life, and air also is for life. This was the second day.

On the third day the land came out of the water. The third day means resurrection. The Lord Jesus was resurrected on the third day. He was the good land that came out of the water of death. After the earth came out of the water on the third day, all kinds of life were produced. All life comes out of the resurrected Christ.

Because of higher life, there is the need of greater light. Therefore, on the fourth day the great light-bearers, the sun, the moon, and the stars came forth. On the fifth day the higher animal life was produced. The fish in the waters, the birds in the air, and the beasts of the field—all of these animal lives—were produced.

Then on the sixth day the highest life among creatures was produced. This is the human life, the life which is according to the image of God, the highest of all lives. Now we can see that Genesis 1 is not a record of creation but a record of life.

## **THE TREE OF LIFE**

Genesis 2 continues by showing how God made man from the dust of the ground and placed him before the tree of life. By the side of the tree of life was another tree, the tree of knowledge. Man was made with the highest life among the created lives, but man still needs the divine life, the eternal life, the uncreated life. Genesis 2 gives us the details of how man was made and for what purpose. Man was made in three parts—the body, soul, and spirit. The body is for contacting the physical world, the soul is our being, and the spirit is the part whereby we may contact God. We are a person with a body without and a spirit within so that we may receive God into us as the divine life, and this divine life is signified by the tree of life. The highest life among all the created lives must receive God as the divine life. Then we will be one with God.

If we will receive the divine life, we will have the living water flowing within us as shown in Genesis 2. By the tree of life, a river was flowing, and in the flow of the river, precious materials were produced: gold, bdellium (pearl), and onyx (precious stone). These precious stones are for the purpose of

producing a bride. Following this, there is a bride (Eve) to match the bridegroom (Adam). This bride, we know by Revelation 21, typifies the holy city built with these three kinds of precious materials: gold, pearl, and precious stones. Thus, this is not a record of creation but a record of life which produces material for the building up of the universal bride to match the universal Bridegroom. This is the opening of the sixty-six books of the Bible. The first two chapters of the Bible are a record showing how life produces the materials to build up the bride.

### **LIFE, NOT KNOWLEDGE**

Brothers and sisters, do we need teachings? Do we need doctrines? No! Praise the Lord, we need life, and Christ is life, and Christ is God. God is in Christ as our life.

If we read the Bible from Genesis 1 to the Gospel of John, we see that “in Him [Christ] was life” (John 1:4), and He says, “I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly” (10:10). He said again and again that He is life. He told Martha that He is life (11:25), and He told His disciples that He is life (14:6). He came that we may have life. Life is all we need.

Then in the last book of the Bible, the Lord says, “I am...the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever” (Rev. 1:17-18). “To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life (2:7). What He means is that *He* is the tree of life. In John 6:57 He says, “He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.” It is a matter of eating, not of knowing. It is a matter of life, not of knowledge.

Therefore, in this last book we have all these terms: *tree of life*, *crown of life*, *book of life*, *water of life*, and *waters of life*. The tree of life is for us to eat, the water of life is for us to drink, and the crown of life is for us to wear. We must take something into us as life, we must put something upon us as life, and we must be recorded in the book of life. Life, life, life, life! It is life, not knowledge. We must learn how to eat of life, how to drink of life, and how to wear life.

The good Christians are the eating and drinking ones, not the knowing ones. Christianity always tells people that they must know this and they must know that. Brothers must know that they are to love their wives. Sisters must know

that they have to submit to their husbands. Christianity always tells people to know, know, know. There are so many “dos,” and so many “don’ts.” Everyone must know what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. But “to know” is a matter of knowledge and belongs to another tree. There are two trees: one is the tree of life, and the other is the tree of knowledge (Gen. 2:9). The “knowing” in Christianity belongs to the tree of knowledge.

What we need is not to know but to eat and drink. “To him who overcomes, to him I will give to *eat* of the tree of life” (Rev. 2:7). “Let him who is thirsty come...take the water of life freely” (22:17). We must eat and drink.

“He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street” (v. 1). This means that out of the redeeming God, the Lamb-God, proceeds the river of life, and on either side of the river grows the tree of life. We have the river of life for us to drink and the tree of life for us to eat. If anyone comes and tells you that you have to know, know, know, you must realize that he is one who is sent from the tree of knowledge, not from the tree of life. But if someone tells you that we all need to eat and drink of Christ, we must say, “Hallelujah, this one comes from the New Jerusalem!”

Are you an eating and drinking Christian or a knowing Christian? If we will eat and drink, eventually we will have something to wear as a crown. Our glory must not be in knowledge, but in life. Life is our glory; life is our boast. Is Christ knowledge? No, He is life! We are boasting in life. Life is our crown; life is our glory!

If you meet a brother with a long face, be sure that he has a clear mind, and in the clear mind is an abundance of knowledge. But if you meet a brother with a broad face, saying—“O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!”—be sure that he is one who is enjoying the Lord. He is full of Christ, and because of this, he is full of joy. You may say that he is foolish, but he is joyful.

I like to see all the brothers and sisters with a broad face, smiling all the time and saying, “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!” They may not know anything, but they do enjoy Christ.

Are you full of joy, or are you full of knowledge? We must not be full of knowledge, but full of Christ who is our life and joy. Praise the Lord!

Revelation is a book of life, because it affords us the tree of life, the water of life, the crown of life, and the book of life.

When we are joyful and rejoicing, the Lord Jesus is glorified, and the enemy is put to shame. For years I have been afraid of any Christian with a long face. Whenever I meet this kind of Christian, I am fearful. While I am talking to him, he is so cold, with a long face and turning eyes. Is this a proper and normal Christian? I must say that this is an abnormal and dead Christian. When people talk to us, we must say, “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!”

### **A RELIGION OF TEACHINGS**

What we need today is not knowledge. I know that this may cause some to be offended, but I cannot help it. I must tell the people of the Lord that they do not need knowledge. What they need is life, and life is nothing less than Christ Himself. This is all we need. We do not need knowledge, and we do not need religion. Christianity is a religion of teachings. No other religion has so many books as Christianity. It is really a religion of teachings, with knowledge as the central matter.

In Revelation, strictly speaking, there is not much teaching. It is a book of life. There is the tree of life, the water of life, the crown of life, and the book of life. Everything must be a matter of life.

When I first came to this country, some asked me concerning absolute grace. Another asked me about eternal security. Others asked me if I was a Calvinist or an Arminian. Do you know how I answered? I said, “I have *Christ*, so I have something more than absolute grace. I do not care for absolute grace; I only care for Christ. Christ is the best security. Nothing is as secure as Christ.” Christianity has many teachings about certain doctrines, such as justification by faith, sanctification, and holiness. But where is holiness, where is sanctification, and where is justification by faith? Everything is in Christ. If we enjoy Christ, we have justification. If we enjoy Christ, we have the day-by-day sanctification. If we are enjoying Christ and taking Him as everything to us, we are really holy. We may not know the term *holiness*, but we have the reality, because Christ is our holiness.

It is good not to *know*. Before Adam and Eve took of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they were innocent. They did not know anything. One saint said

that to know something sinful is sin. I do not know this or that, but I do know that Christ must be our everything. When I enjoy Christ, I simply do not know anything. I am just joyful and rejoicing. What we all need is Christ, not Christianity. We need life, not knowledge.

We all need a change. We not only must take the way of the local church, but we need a *change*. Otherwise, we will bring all the Babylonian things into the local church, such as the knowledge and teachings from our background. This will do much damage.

The age has been turned. In the book of Revelation, the third person of the Godhead becomes not only the second but also the sevenfold intensified Spirit. We need life, and life is in Christ, and Christ is in the Spirit. The Spirit today is the seven Spirits—the sevenfold intensified Spirit.

### **NOTHING TO DO WITH THE LORD'S LIFE**

The Lord Jesus in Revelation 3 told the church in Laodicea that they were lukewarm, neither cold nor hot; so He must spew them out. Lukewarmness does not suit the Lord's taste. If you are cold, just be cold; if you are hot, be hot. But if you are lukewarm, the Lord will spew you out. What does this mean? It means that you have nothing to do with His life.

It is not only a matter of being saved or of being lost. We must take care of the enjoyment of Christ. Are you enjoying Christ, and are you enjoyable to Christ? We all must enjoy Christ, and we all must be enjoyable to Him in order to have the life fellowship with Him. We simply need to enjoy His sevenfold Spirit.

Today's Christianity always has teaching, teaching, teaching. We came out of a background of religious teachings. Today's Christianity is altogether a religion of teachings. The Lord has no intention of giving a religion to His people. The Lord did speak to the Jewish people, and it was put into writings, comprising the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. But the Jewish people made a religion out of these books. They only care for doctrines and religion.

Some years ago, I met a Hebrew believer. Both he and his wife told me how they were orthodox Jews before they became believers of Christ. The Jewish religion had so many regulations, even how to wear your shoes and in what

direction to place your shoes at night. Every regulation was based upon a verse of the Bible. They could tell you why they had to put their shoes in a certain direction by referring to a verse in the Old Testament. Would you laugh at them? If you would laugh at them, you must laugh at yourself first.

The Lord had no intention of giving the Jewish people a religion. His intention was to give them the living Word that they might gain and enjoy Him. But they made a dead religion of the Word, causing the Word to be dead. They had the knowledge of the Bible without a living contact with the Lord. So when the Lord Jesus came, they did not know Him.

### **THE LIVING STAR**

When the Lord Jesus was born, the magi came from the heathen world. They did not have the Bible, and they did not have the knowledge of the Word. They did not have religion, yet they saw the star. King Herod called the leaders of the Jewish people to ask them where Christ should be born. Immediately, they told Herod that He should be born in Bethlehem. They had the knowledge, but they did not go to Bethlehem. However, the magi, who did not have knowledge, went there and found Christ.

When I was young, I was taught that as long as we have the Bible, everything is all right. But later I discovered that this is not true. Here is the proof: The magi were told by the people who had the Bible that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, and they went to Bethlehem. But still they had a problem. The Bible tells us He was to be born in Bethlehem, but it does not say on what street, in what house, and at what address. Praise the Lord, when the Bible was lacking, the living star came. The living star was above, and the magi were walking beneath. It was the star that led them to the very place where the Lord Jesus was born (Matt. 2:9). If the Bible were everything, there would be no need for the Lord to be the Holy Spirit within. The Bible may tell us the principles, but the details must come from the inner anointing of the Holy Spirit.

I would say that it was not the Bible that eventually led the magi to Christ, but the living star. I do believe in the Bible, and I do love this book. But the Bible is without, and the Holy Spirit is within. These are the two great gifts that God has given us. The Holy Bible must be one with the Holy Spirit; then

it becomes living. Without the Holy Spirit, the Bible is dead. Without the Holy Spirit, the Bible is just the dead letters that kill.

The Lord Jesus said, “The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (John 6:63). The Bible should not be the word of knowledge in letters, but the word of life in the Spirit. The Bible must be a book of *life* in the Spirit.

## **DIFFERENT KINDS OF RELIGION**

Christianity has even made so many different kinds of religions out of the New Testament. Some take verses about immersion and develop a religion out of immersion. Others take verses about the presbytery (eldership) and make a religion out of them. Some take verses about speaking in tongues and make a tongue-speaking religion. Some take a passage about head covering and make a head-covering religion. Then some argue that you should not cover your head, so they make a non-head-covering religion. Some insist to cover the head with a black head covering, and others with a white head covering. So there are two kinds of religion for head covering. Even more than this, some have a short covering, and others have a long covering. Some take verses about foot-washing and make a foot-washing religion out of them. All these religions have come out of Christianity’s doctrinal use of the Bible. But none of them is right. I do believe that the Lord is going to tear down all these religions.

## **SELF-MADE RELIGION**

Do not be religious. Do not have a self-made religion. We all have a kind of self-made religion. Some like to be silent, some like to be loud, some like to do this, and some like to do that. Some say that Los Angeles is too noisy, and they do not like it. They prefer silence. But this is just their self-made religion. They do not like it, but the Lord honors it. What can they say?

There is something quite peculiar which exists in China. Some Christians shake their chairs whenever they meet. I am not for it, but I have discovered its principle. It is so easy to be in our mind, but when they all shake the chairs, their mind is gone. The more they shake the chairs, the more their mind is gone. We do need the “chair-shaking”! I do not encourage you to do this literally, but we need this in principle.

In my last trip to Taiwan, some of the brothers told me that the chair-shaking Christians had built a big magnificent church building, and they told me where they got the money. A rich man was sick, and no doctors could help him. Then the chair-shakers went to see him, knelt down around him, and shook their chairs and prayed. He was healed! I am not preaching for them, but there is something here. He was thoroughly healed and so happy, so he gave them a large amount of money and told them to build a church.

You may say that it is not good to shake the chairs, but the Lord healed the man. What would you say? I do not encourage you to shake the chairs, but there is a principle we must see. People who are so much in the mind really need to shake the chairs. They are so religious and so full of doctrines. They know everything, but they are so dead and cold and have nearly nothing of life. What they need is the shaking off of all their knowledge so that they may be turned to the Spirit to enjoy life.

The Lord has turned the age. In Revelation there is no religion and no doctrine, but the tree of life, the water of life, the crown of life, and the book of life. The Lord is living, not religious. We too must be full of life, not full of doctrines and teachings. We must not be religious. We must drop all the doctrines and teachings and be filled with the sevenfold Spirit.

The last book of the Bible has no doctrine and no religion but is full of life. We must be filled with this life, and we must express this life. This is today's age. May the Lord turn us to the age of the sevenfold Spirit for the realization and enjoyment of life.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **REVELATION BEING A BOOK OF PRAISE**

In the last chapter we saw that Revelation is a book of life. In this chapter we will see that it is a book of praise. In Revelation 5:8-14 there are the praises in the beginning of the book; then in 19:1-7 there are the praises again at the end. In between, in 7:9-12; 14:1-3; 15:2-4; as well as in other places, there are also praises. Revelation is really a book of praise.

### **PRAISING CHRIST**

Why are there so many praises in the book of Revelation? It is mainly for Christ. Christ has won the victory, Christ is victorious, and Christ is worthy. So all things in the heavens, on the earth, under the earth, and in the sea are praising Christ. If everything in the whole universe must praise, then what about the church? Should the church be silent? How poor Christianity is today! Not only those in the heavens, not only those on the earth, but even those under the earth and in the sea are praising. What about us? We have to take the lead to give more praises. We see how wrong Christianity is today. They build up their cathedrals and church buildings with stained-glass windows and make their places of so-called worship so dark. When you enter these places, it is so dark, and the roof is so steep that you are afraid to open your mouth. That kind of building keeps your mouth shut. Have you ever been in a Catholic cathedral? It simply frightens you into silence. Who did this? It was Satan.

So many Christians talk about 1 Corinthians 12, but they have missed the first three verses. Verse 1 says something about being spiritual, and verse 2 says that when the Corinthians were Gentiles, they were led away to dumb idols. All the idol worshippers are dumb worshippers. The word *dumb* in this verse does not mean that they were stupid, but that they made no sound. Dumb idols have dumb worshippers. All the worshippers of idols are silent. Once, I saw several hundred people worshipping idols without any voice; all of them were so dumb and silent. I have also seen Catholic churches in many places. I discovered that all the worshippers in the Catholic churches are also dumb. They go to some of the images and burn candles without any voice. They are so dumb and so silent.

Christianity teaches people that they must be silent when they worship God. Is there any scriptural ground for this? Acts 2:47 says that the early church was praising God. Can you praise God silently? In a sense, you may pray to God silently, but I do not believe you can praise God silently. Who can praise without uttering something? Do you see the subtlety of the enemy?

In a sense, the services of today's Christian churches are almost a dumb worship. They have pastors to give the message, and the audience sits and listens. Everybody knows how to listen, but very few know how to praise God. They do not have any spiritual praising; what they have are the formal solos and the special numbers by the choir. We need to read the book of Revelation again. If in all realms of the entire universe everyone is praising, why must we keep silent? I am afraid that many Christians will be surprised that so many in the universe can praise, but they are not used to praising.

## **TWO KINDS OF MEETINGS**

Suppose we were all to come into the meeting place in such a silent way: everyone sits quietly, waiting for the song leader to call a hymn; then the pastor offers a prayer and gives a sermon; then there is the benediction, and we are dismissed. Do you like this kind of meeting? You may say that you do not know how to praise, but at least you can say, "O Lord! Amen! Hallelujah!" At least you can shout, "Praise the Lord!" Everyone can sing that Jesus is the Lord! Of these two kinds of meetings, which do you prefer? Which do you think the Lord prefers? Do you prefer a noisy kind of meeting, or do you prefer a silent one? Regardless of how much you simply listen and hear, there is nearly nothing satisfying and refreshing; there is nearly nothing nourishing. But the more you say, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" the more you are satisfied. The more you sing it, the more you are refreshed and nourished. Why is this? It is because you are exercising your spirit to contact the Lord. The Lord is not a thought or doctrine. The Lord is the life-giving Spirit, and the Spirit is the breath. Christ is the intensified Spirit, the sevenfold breath. He is not waiting for us to understand Him; He is waiting for us to breathe Him in. The more we say, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" the more we breathe Him in. This is really good for our spirit, and it is really good for Him too. We can sense the inner satisfying, the inner watering, the inner refreshing, and the inner nourishing.

## **THE WRONG ORGAN**

We simply need to know how to exercise our spirit. We were taught to understand, to listen, and to discern. We were taught to exercise our mind. In this way, the Lord is not the Spirit but a set of doctrines. This is why today's Christianity is so dead. We must be assured that the Lord has turned the age from dead doctrines to the sevenfold living Spirit. Praise the Lord!

We all must learn to praise. Let us sing and praise Him and forget about our mind. We must often say or sing, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" This is the exercise of the spirit. The more we say, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" the more we breathe Him in. In the past we used the wrong organ. We used the mind instead of the spirit to contact the Lord. But John 4:24 says, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit." In the past we did not worship God in our spirit, but in our mind. Now the Lord wants to turn us from the mind to the spirit, from the doctrines to the Spirit. So we all must learn how to exercise our spirit to praise the Lord. This is the right organ for us to worship God.

The Lord is life, and life is in the Spirit, and life *is* the Spirit. The Spirit is called "the Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2). "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). When we touch the Spirit, we touch life. Life is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is just like the air. The Greek word for *Spirit* is *pneuma*, and this also means "air." Today the Lord is the heavenly, divine *pneuma* to us. He is the air, the breath, and there is only one way to take in the breath—to breathe. If we try to learn, to listen, or to understand the breath, we get nothing. Christ is not Christianity; He is not a religion or a set of doctrines. He is the life-giving Spirit. He is the sevenfold Spirit, and as the Spirit He is the divine air, the heavenly breath for us to breathe.

## **SAVED BY CALLING**

Romans 5:10 says that we will be saved in the Lord's life, and Romans 10:13 says that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. If we put these two verses together, we see that we are saved by calling. Formerly, I thought that Romans 10:13 was only for the unbelievers. Since I had been saved already, I did not feel that I needed this verse. In a sense, we have been saved already, but in another sense, we still need to be saved. For instance, we still need to be saved from our temper. It may be a continual trouble to us. How then can we be saved from our temper? We can be saved not by the

Lord's death but by His life. How can we be saved in the Lord's life? It is by "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" This is the best secret to overcome our temper. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Call!

We must not think that our temper is a small thing. It is so small, but it is so troublesome. Let me ask you a question. Can you say that you have not lost your temper within the past seven days? I am afraid that you cannot say this. So we must not think that our temper is insignificant. It is so practically troublesome. But I have the secret of overcoming the temper. It is just by saying, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" Whenever the little temper comes to bother you, do not try to overcome it. You cannot overcome it, but you can say, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" and the temper is gone. Your temper is not lost but gone.

Husbands and wives, parents, and children are the best helpers of the devil to stir up our temper. But whenever these dear ones are doing their best in this way, we must say from deep within, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" Just try it. This is not being superstitious. The Bible tells us in 2 Chronicles 20:22 that when the people began to praise the Lord, the Lord set ambushes for the enemy. When we praise the Lord by saying, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" the ambushes will be set.

In Psalm 8:2 the word *strength* can also be rendered "praise." So it could be read in this way: "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings / You have established praise / Because of Your adversaries, / To stop the enemy and the avenger." The Lord established strength with praise out of the mouths of the babes and sucklings. It is this that silences the enemy. It will not only defeat the enemy, but it will also shut the enemy's mouth.

So we must learn to praise. The secret to overcome all situations is to praise. You may say that you do not know the Lord's way for you. There is no need to know. Just praise the Lord. "Lord, I do not know Your way; I do not know, Lord. Hallelujah! I do not know, Lord. Amen! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! I simply do not know, Lord. But You know, Lord. Hallelujah!" If you will praise the Lord in this way for fifteen minutes, you will be clear. If you feel lonely, do not try to pray by begging for the Lord's presence. Just say, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" In less than five minutes you will have the sense that the Lord is with you. You can

get everything just by these four words: *O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!* Sometimes it is even better to sing these words. Whatever you need, this praising will bring it to you. Poor Christianity! They have complicated matters with so many teachings and “spiritual” philosophies to exercise the mind. But praise the Lord! His way is so simple, so practical, so rich, so living, so refreshing, and so nourishing. We could use hundreds of words to describe it! “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!”

We should never look at ourselves. We are not good for praising. Only Christ is worthy. Look at Him! He is worthy! The Lamb is worthy to receive all the praises, glory, honor, and blessing. To praise in this way is not only food but also medicine. It not only nourishes; it also heals.

## **THE GOLDEN CHURCH**

Look at Christ, and look at the church. Do not say that the church is poor. No, the church is golden. If you say that the church is poor, sooner or later you will lose the case. If not today, then tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. Someday the church will be so golden. I have already spoken of the heathen prophet Balaam, who was hired by Balak to curse the people of God. At that time the people of God were really a mess, and Balak thought that because of their poor situation it was a good opportunity for the prophet Balaam to curse them. Then Balaam tried to curse them, but when he opened his mouth, he said, “He [God] has not beheld iniquity in Jacob” (Num. 23:21). Is that not strange? God said through the mouth of Balaam that He has not seen any sin among the people of Israel. Balak was troubled because he thought the people of Israel were full of sin, yet Balaam said that God did not behold any sin among them. Then Balaam was brought to another point of view and was asked to curse them again. Balak thought that if he gave him more money, he would curse them this time. But Balaam opened his mouth and said, “How fair are your tents, O Jacob” (24:5). Do not say that the people of God are a mess. A thousand years to the Lord are but one day. He will make them golden someday. Do not say that the church in Los Angeles is poor. You must say that the church in Los Angeles is really golden.

At the time the book of Revelation was written, I believe that the apostle John was greatly disappointed. By that time nearly all the local churches were degraded and poor, and he was in exile on the island of Patmos. John must have been disappointed and troubled with the situation in the local churches.

But he heard a great voice, and he turned and saw seven golden lampstands. There was nothing impure; every stand was golden. Can you believe that all the local churches are golden? We must believe this. One day, sooner or later, there will be a great voice in the heavens saying that Babylon is fallen, and the Lamb's wife is ready. The Lord will perform it. We must be fully assured that everything will be so marvelous. Do not be shortsighted. We must learn to have foresight. We need the foresight to see that the local churches will be so golden and transformed. Let us praise the Lord for Christ, and let us also praise Him for the church. We do have something to praise about, and we do have something to praise with.

The more you say that the church is poor, the poorer it becomes in your eyes. But we must forget what we think and what we feel and put our trust in the Lord. We must have the foresight in the Lord that all the local churches in all the localities are good. We must all learn to praise the Lord in this way.

### **CALLING AND PRAISING**

The Word says, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). It also says, "The same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him" (v. 12). Do not think that to call is to pray. What is it then to call? "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" It is even something more than this. Suppose your house is on fire. Do you pray? Do you go to your neighbor's house and ask him to please do something to help you? That is what it means to pray. Then what is it to call? "*Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire!*" Whenever my temper was stirred up, I used to pray, "Lord, help me not to lose my temper." But eventually, I mostly always lost my temper. But now when my temper is stirred up, I just say, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" and my temper is gone. We must learn to call. This is not a long-distance call; this is a local call, and the line is always open. We must learn to call on the Lord, not just to pray.

We must also learn to praise the Lord. Calling is better than praying, and praising is better than calling. The best call is to praise, and praising is the best calling and the best breathing.

The Lord has turned the age. We should not be old anymore; we must give up the old way. I do not know what the new way is, but the principle is this: in the new way, teaching and preaching are not the main thing. Exercising the

spirit is the main thing, either by praising, by praying, or by witnessing. This is why the last book of the Bible is a book of praise. In this last age we must be praising churches, and all our meetings must be praising meetings.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **REVELATION BEING A BOOK OF VICTORY**

We have seen that the book of Revelation is a book of the sevenfold intensified Spirit, a book of the local churches, a book of Christ, a book of life, and also a book of praise. Now we must see that this book is eventually a book of victory.

### **THE VICTORIOUS CHRIST**

Revelation 5:4-5 tells us that the apostle John wept: “I wept much because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look into it. And one of the elders said to me, Do not weep; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so that He may open the scroll and its seven seals.” Why did John weep? It was because in the whole universe—heaven, earth, under the earth, and in the sea—there was no one worthy to open the secret of God’s economy. No one was worthy; so he wept. But one of the elders came and told him not to weep, because there was One who was worthy, and that was Christ. There is no need to weep when you have Christ. Without Christ everyone in the entire universe must weep. Without Christ the whole universe is empty, and without Christ no one is worthy. But, Hallelujah! today we have Christ! So we do not need to weep. Christ is now the Lion: He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He has prevailed, and He has won the victory. So this book is a book of victory. We do not need to weep; we have to shout! We must rejoice and praise because we have such a Christ. He is the Lion that has prevailed. He has won the victory. So we all must say, “Victory, victory, Hallelujah!”

### **EVERYTHING BEING ACCOMPLISHED**

“The seventh angel trumpeted; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever” (11:15). Do not believe the present situations. Everything on this earth is a lie and a falsehood. Do not believe that it is real. We must tell Satan that this is a lie. The wars in the world today are lies. The troubles in the schools are lies. All things are lies. We have seen

that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord. Hallelujah! Amen!

In my travels many people have told me how disappointing the situation is in the world. But do we need to be disappointed? No! We must shout, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord!” We have seen the victory. Some victories have been won in the past, some victories are being won at the present, and some victories will be won in the future. Some are gained in the past, some are being gained now, and some will be gained in the future. But whether they were gained, are now being gained, or will be gained, it is all the same in the eyes of God. With God there is no time. Everything has come to pass. Hallelujah, it has come to pass! The Bible does not say that it *will* come to pass or that it *must* come to pass, but that it “has come to pass” (Rev. 21:6). Praise the Lord!

### **THE BROTHERS OVERCOMING**

Then in Revelation 12:9-11 we see that the accuser, Satan, has been cast down. “The great dragon was cast down, the ancient serpent, he who is called the Devil and Satan, he who deceives the whole inhabited earth; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.” These verses do not say that Satan should be cast down, but that he has been cast down. Do you believe this? Hallelujah! It has come to pass! Then the salvation, the kingdom, the glory, and the power are the Lord’s. Verse 11 does not say that the brothers *will* overcome. No, they *overcame*. There is no need for us to overcome. This is not overcoming in the future. The brothers *overcame* the accuser because of the blood of the Lamb. Is the blood of the Lamb to be shed? No, the blood of the Lamb has already been shed two thousand years ago.

They overcame him because of the word of their testimony. There is no need for us to do anything but declare the word of our testimony. We can tell Satan, “Look, we have the word in Revelation 12:9-11; let us read it to you. This is the word of our testimony.” There is no need for us to strive. We must realize that Satan has already been overcome. The blood of the Lamb has been

shed; the victory has been won for us already. Someday I would like to hear a young brother stand up in the meeting and say, “Satan, listen to me, read Revelation 12:9-11. If you will not read it, let me read it to you: ‘They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb.’ This is the word of my testimony.”

There is one more thing in these verses. “They loved not their soul-life even unto death.” As long as we love our soul-life, the victory is gone. But as long as we do not love our soul-life, the victory is won. We must love not the soul-life. When we lose our soul-life, Satan loses the ground. If we love not the soul-life, he loses the battle. The brothers overcame Satan by the blood, by the word of their testimony, and by loving not their soul-life. Victory, victory, Hallelujah!

### **BABYLON BEING FALLEN**

“Another angel, a second one, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great, who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the fury of her fornication!” (14:8). The great Babylon is fallen. We do not care for Christianity, we do not care for Christendom, we do not care for the Roman Catholic Church, and we do not care for all the denominations, because the Bible says that the great Babylon is fallen. This is a declaration. Christianity is fallen, Christendom is fallen, Catholicism is fallen, and all the denominations are fallen. Hallelujah!

“After these things I heard as it were a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power are of our God. For true and righteous are His judgments; for He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He avenged the blood of His slaves at her hand. And a second time they said, Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who sits upon the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah! And a voice came out from the throne, saying, Praise our God, all His slaves and those who fear Him, the small and the great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns” (19:1-6).

Babylon has been judged, so all the servants of the Lord must say Amen, Hallelujah! I like these words. First, there is *Amen*, and then *Hallelujah*. After

we began to use the four words, *O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah*, I thought that perhaps we had put these words in the wrong order. But later I found that this is the order in the Bible—Amen, Hallelujah! But Amen, Hallelujah for what? It is for the judgment of Christendom, the judgment of the great Babylon. Do not believe the present situation. It is a lie. Sooner or later, we will see it fall, and in the eyes of God it is fallen already. Do not believe the present situation of today's Christendom. It is all a lie, and in the eyes of God it is already judged. We have to say Amen, Hallelujah!

We should not pray, “O Lord, the war; Lord, the riots; Lord, the distresses; Lord, how prevailing is Catholicism; Lord, O Lord, do something Lord.” No! Then what do we need to say? Amen, Hallelujah! Revelation 19:7 says, “Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” There is no need for us to pray. We can just shout and praise. If we pray in a poor way, Satan will clap his hands. But the Lord would say, “I have done everything already. It is done. What are you praying like that for? Didn't I tell you that Babylon is fallen? Do you need to pray in such a poor way? No! All you have to do is rejoice and praise.” So we must say, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great!”

Revelation 20:10 says that the devil was not only cast out of heaven but cast into the lake of fire. “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also the beast and the false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Where is Satan? Have you seen it? We must say that Brother John saw it, and I see it too! Satan was cast into the lake of fire. Not only Satan but also “death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire” (v. 14). The devil, death, and Hades, these three awful things, all were cast into the lake of fire. So we must say Amen, Hallelujah! Do we need to pray? No, we must praise and rejoice because we have seen the victory.

## **THE HOLY CITY**

After all the negative things, in Revelation 21:2 we see the positive things. “I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” John saw the holy city, the bride prepared and adorned as a bride for her husband. Have you seen this? I do not care for today's situation of the local churches. Sometimes many bad

reports come, but I do not care because I have Revelation 21:2. Oh, the bride, the adornment, and the preparation! In the eyes of God one thousand years are just as one day. Be patient. In the eyes of God everything is ready. John saw the holy city.

### **“THEY HAVE COME TO PASS”**

“He said to me, They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely” (v. 6). When the Lord Jesus was dying on the cross, He said, “It is finished.” That is redemption. But now on the throne He says, “They have come to pass.” This is the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose. As to redemption, it is finished. As to God’s eternal purpose, it has come to pass. Do we need to pray? No! Then what must we do? Praise the Lord!

Do we need to say that the church is so miserable and so muddy? Do we have to ask, beg, and wait on the Lord? No, we must rejoice and shout and praise Him. How many books do you have in your Bible? Do you have sixty-six books? Then have you read the last one? On the cross it was written, “It is finished,” but in Revelation it is also written, “They have come to pass.” Hallelujah! They have come to pass! For our salvation, it is finished, and for the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose, it has come to pass! So we all must praise Him. This is why Revelation is a book of praise. It is a book of praise because it is a book of victory.

Finally, the Lord Jesus testifies in Revelation 22:20, Yes, I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” The Lord says, “I come quickly.” What then should we say? “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” This is Revelation. Christ has accomplished everything; He has won the victory. The church is prepared, and all the negative things have been done away. The earth is judged, Babylon is fallen, Satan is cast into the lake of fire, and even death and Hades are also put into the lake of fire. They have come to pass! All that is left is the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem. Praise the Lord! Have you seen it?

### **HOW TO PARTICIPATE**

In the eyes of God everything has been accomplished. Then how can we participate in all of this? If we are going to participate and partake of all these

things, we must realize the sevenfold intensified Spirit. Teachings and doctrines can never help us to partake. Religion and Christianity cannot help us to participate. Only the sevenfold intensified Spirit can work this out for us. At the very outset, this book speaks of the seven Spirits of God before His throne. This is the first means by which we can participate in all these victories. This is why we are so happy. Do not think that we do not have any problems. We do, but we do not care for all the problems. We are so happy because we realize the seven Spirits of God. This is the first thing.

Then the second is the local churches. If we are going to participate in all these victories, we must be in the local churches. The local churches are the places, the locations, and the means for us to realize all the victories of Christ and the church. There is no other place. I was in the denominations for years, and I never knew this book. I was taught so much about this book, but I never knew this book. This book was never opened to me because I was not on the right standing. But one day I came into the local church. Then this last book of the Bible became so transparently clear to me. It is by the seven Spirits, and it is in the local churches.

The third thing we must see to participate in all these things is the different Christ. In all these chapters, have you seen the different Christ? What is the difference? He is the burning One with seven eyes, and He is the Lion. In chapter 7 He is the other Angel who puts the seal of God upon God's people. In chapter 8 He is another Angel, who puts the incense into the prayers of the saints. Then in chapter 10 He is the strong Angel who comes down from heaven to take possession of the sea and the land. In chapter 14 He is the One like the Son of Man sitting on the cloud with the sickle to reap the harvest. In chapter 18 He is the Angel with great authority, illuminating the earth and crying strongly, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great!" Besides all the other aspects we have seen in the previous chapters, there are also these five aspects in chapters 7, 8, 10, 14, and 18. Christ is such a Christ. In the book of Revelation, He is not a small Christ, a gentle Christ, a kind Christ, a patient Christ, or a suffering Christ. He is a different Christ.

In Christianity there are many messages about Christ being so patient, so suffering, and so silent. But the last book of the Bible tells us about a different Christ. He is no longer patient and suffering. Eventually, in chapter 19 He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. In Revelation Christ is so different, so bold, so fierce, so burning, and so living. We are not in the Epistles today.

Today we are in the book of Revelation. We need to know this different Christ, this other Angel: Oh, the seven Spirits; oh, the local churches; and oh, the different Christ!

Then the fourth thing that we must see in order to participate is life. We all must know life. Revelation is a book of life. Do not pay attention to the forms, the regulations, the teachings, the doctrines, Christianity, and religion. No, we must pay our full attention to life. If we are in the seven Spirits, if we are in the local churches, and if we experience the different Christ, we will be so much in life. Day and night, morning and evening, all the time we will be praising and shouting for joy. Then we will have the victory. We will participate in all the victories by means of the seven Spirits, the local churches, the different Christ, life, and praising.

Praise the Lord that He has led us to and stationed us in the local churches! Here we experience life through the sevenfold intensified Spirit and stand on the proper, unique ground of oneness for the unique expression of the Lord's Body. We share a different Christ. This is why we are beside ourselves. We just cannot help it. We must be so, because this Christ is so different, and the life is so abundant in the local churches. There is nothing left for us to do but praise Him and enjoy His victory.

### **THE WAY TO BE VICTORIOUS**

Today, if you were to ask me how to be victorious, I would tell you that there is no need for you to try to be victorious. Just say from deep within, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" and you will be so victorious. Just praise the Lord and realize that today is the day of the sevenfold intensified Spirit. Then you must be in the local church. You must realize that Christ is so living, so bold, and so burning within you as your life. "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!"

Why do we say "O Lord"? It is because when we say "O Lord," we touch the sevenfold Spirit. We say "Amen" to what? We say "Amen" to the sevenfold Spirit, "Amen" to the local churches, and "Amen" to the Christ so bold, so fierce, so burning, and so living. "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, the sevenfold Spirit! O Lord, the local churches! O Lord, the Christ so bold, so living, so burning, and so rich!" We are simply

victorious this way. There is no need of trying or doing anything. Just say, “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!” Just praise the Lord, and you will be victorious.

If you praise Him in this way for five or ten minutes, you will be over all and strengthened in your spirit. Why? It is because you contact the living Lord. It is not a religion, Christianity, a lot of doctrines, or a set of teachings, forms, or regulations. No. It is the living Christ, the present Christ, the instant Christ, and the up-to-date Christ.

It is simply by realizing the sevenfold Spirit, being in the local churches, and realizing that Christ is your life. Then start to praise: “O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!” Then everything will be under your feet, and you will enjoy the victory found in the book of Revelation.