

THE
Divine
ECONOMY



W I T N E S S L E E

L I V I N G S T R E A M M I N I S T R Y

THE DIVINE ECONOMY

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PREFACE

This book is composed of a series of messages given by Brother Witness Lee in Brazil in March of 1984.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DIVINE ECONOMY

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:9-10; 3:9-11, 2-6; 1 Cor. 9:16-17; 1 Tim. 1:3-4

GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE, WILL, AND PURPOSE

Although the divine economy is the central topic in the New Testament, it has not been touched that much among the Christians in past centuries. The matter of God's economy is greatly developed in Paul's writings. Ephesians is a book on God's eternal purpose to have the church as the Body of Christ. In such a book Paul uses the word *economy* (1:10; 3:2, 9). In Ephesians the apostle Paul wants to show us that the church as the Body of Christ is something of God's economy. Paul uses the word *economy* in relationship with other words such as *good pleasure*, *will*, and *purpose* (1:9, 11). God has a good pleasure, which is His heart's desire. God also has a will, which is according to His good pleasure. The reason I visit a certain place is because I first have a desire. Then I make a decision to go to that place. This is the exercise of my will according to my desire, my good pleasure. God's will came out of His desire. In Ephesians the word *purpose* is used as a noun and as a verb (3:11; 1:9). The purpose comes out of the will. In God's heart there was a desire, and out of this desire God made a will. According to God's will, He made a purpose.

GOD'S ECONOMY

Because God has a purpose, He needs an economy. The Greek word for *economy* is *oikonomia*. This Greek word is composed of two words—*oikos*, meaning "house" or "household," and *nomos*, meaning "law." An economy is a house law, a household administration. God's household administration is for the carrying out of God's purpose, God's plan. God's economy is God's planned administration to carry out His eternal purpose.

We all need to realize what God's eternal purpose is. Bible scholars have discovered that in God's planned administration there are different ages. The Bible unveils to us the age before the law, the age of the law, the age of grace, and the age of the kingdom. These are the four main ages revealed in the

Scriptures. The age before the law was from Adam to Moses (Rom. 5:13-14). The age of the law was from Moses to Christ's first coming (John 1:17). The age of grace is from Christ's first coming to His second coming (v. 17; Titus 2:11). The fourth age will be the age of the kingdom, the age of the millennium, the thousand years of Christ's reign (Rev. 20:4-6). In these four different ages God has different ways to deal with His people. In the age before the law, God dealt with the patriarchs mainly according to His mercy and grace based upon His promise. In the age of the law, from Moses to Christ's first coming, God dealt with His people according to the law. From Christ's first coming to His second coming, the age of grace, God deals with us according to His grace. After Christ's second coming, for one thousand years God will deal with His people according to His kingdom. These are the four main different ways for God to deal with people in the four different ages. Although these Bible teachers saw these four different ages, they did not tell us the purpose for which God deals with people in these four major ways.

If you trace the root of the word *economy*, it goes back to a word that refers to the parceling out of food, the distributing of food as in parcels. Joseph is a good illustration of this. His job was to distribute all the food supply of Pharaoh to feed all the hungry people. This root word also means to distribute food to the cattle for grazing. To distribute is to dispense. In God's economy He dispenses Himself into His people as life, as life supply, and as everything to them. God wants to dispense Himself as food to us.

The Holy Bible tells us that God is rich as food to us. The Lord Jesus declared that He is the bread of life (John 6:48), and Paul says that he was charged to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8). Christ is life, and His riches are unsearchable. All these riches of life are to be dispensed into His believers. Paul was commissioned to be a dispenser of these riches, a steward. He was to be a steward in the same way that Joseph was a great steward to distribute the rich life supply of Pharaoh's household. In the Old Testament Joseph dispensed food to the hungry people, and in the New Testament the apostle Paul dispensed the unsearchable riches of Christ to the believers. By this we can see what the proper denotation of the word *oikonomia* is—God's household administration to dispense the divine riches of the Triune God as life and life supply into His chosen and redeemed people.

In the portions of Scripture we have selected from Ephesians, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy, we can see that, because of such a dispensing, the church has been produced. The church has been produced by the dispensing of the unsearchable riches of Christ. The church is not a religious organization, but the church is the Body of Christ produced by the dispensing of the riches of Christ into all the believers. Every time we are gathered into the name of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 18:20), we enjoy the dispensing of the riches of Christ into our being. It is this dispensing of the Triune God into us that makes us members of the Body of Christ. In the church life the Lord has redeemed us from different peoples and from different races, yet we all are one. We are one because we have the same life. The same riches of Christ have been dispensed and are being dispensed into all of us.

Ephesians 3:9 talks about the dispensation (*oikonomia*), the economy of the mystery, “which throughout the ages has been hidden in God.” God’s mystery is His hidden purpose. His purpose is to dispense Himself into His chosen people. Hence, there is the economy of the mystery of God. This mystery was hidden in God from the ages (that is, from eternity) and through all past ages, but now it has been brought to light to the New Testament believers. Abraham, Moses, and even David did not have a realization of God’s hidden purpose. God opened up His heart to show the apostles His hidden mystery, especially to the apostle Paul. God’s hidden purpose is His economy, His administrative plan, to distribute Himself into all His chosen people. These chosen ones are from different races and cultures around the globe. God redeemed His people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Rev. 5:9). God has chosen us, and Christ has been dispensed into our being. This was planned by God, and this plan of God was His economy.

God had a desire, a good pleasure, according to which He made a will. Based upon His will, God made a purpose. He then made a plan to administrate His purpose, and this plan is to dispense Himself into all His chosen people. This is the economy of God. It was a mystery because it was hidden. It was never made known to anyone until the time of the apostles. In Ephesians, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy, Paul tells us that God has such an economy, which was a mystery but now has been made known to all of us. Now we know this mystery. We know God’s economy, and we are now enjoying His dispensing. The Triune God is dispensing Himself into us to be our life and to be our life supply. He is dispensing Himself into us as our food and our drink that we may live by Him. Is this not wonderful? This is much

better than religion. We do not come together just to have a kind of religious worship service. But we gather together to enjoy the dispensing of the marvelous Triune God into our being. This is God's divine dispensing. God desires to dispense *Himself*. In the Lord's ministry we only care for the divine dispensing of the Triune God Himself into His chosen people.

God's economy is according to His wisdom. According to His wisdom, God created the universe with man as the center. In God's wisdom He became a man to live on this earth for thirty-three and a half years, to die on the cross to terminate the old creation, and to resurrect from the dead to germinate the new creation for the single purpose of dispensing Himself as the Triune God into us. It is in this way that God's multifarious wisdom is made known through the church (Eph. 3:10).

We are all here under God's wisdom. What multifarious wisdom it took on God's part to prepare everything so that He could dispense Himself into us! He prepared incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and an all-inclusive redemption in order that He might carry out His economy to dispense Himself into you and me. This is the gospel in its fullness. The gospel is not merely to save sinners from hell to heaven. The gospel involves the Triune God passing through creation, incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, and as the life-giving Spirit dispensing Himself with all that He is, with all that He has attained and obtained, into our being. To merely save sinners from hell to heaven is too small a gospel. God's gospel is to dispense the Triune God into you and me. This is the great gospel! We all need to praise and thank the Lord for the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity into sinners to make them the sons of God.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DIVINE ECONOMY IN GOD'S CREATION (1)

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:1, 26-27; 2:7-9, 10-14, 18-24

God's economy is the main topic of the entire Bible, yet it is very mysterious. It was hidden in God in eternity past and continued to be hidden in God for the first four thousand years of human history. From the time of Adam to the time of the apostles, God's economy was not revealed to man. One day the Lord called a man named Saul (later called Paul). He regenerated him and showed him God's economy. The apostle Paul tells us that God's economy had been hidden in God from the ages (that is, from eternity) and through all past ages (Eph. 3:9). Paul was the one who began to see something hidden in God, something in God's heart that had never been revealed to the sons of men. Paul received a revelation of this mystery, and in his fourteen Epistles, God's economy is stressed, emphasized, and developed to the uttermost.

In 1 Timothy 1:3-4 Paul tells us that the New Testament ministers and teachers should only teach one thing—God's economy. To teach anything else is to teach differently. Christianity has been divided mainly by different teachings, yet in the Bible there is only one main teaching—the teaching of God's economy. In this chapter we want to see the divine economy in God's creation.

GOD'S CREATION OF MAN IN HIS IMAGE AS A VESSEL WITH A HUMAN SPIRIT

Genesis 1 and 2 tell us about God's creation. These chapters unveil the almighty and eternal God as our Creator. God created the universe and He created man. Genesis 1:26 tells us that God created man in His image and according to His likeness. Man was a copy of God. Genesis 2:7 gives us a particular account of God's creation of man: "Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." God created a body for man, and this body was created by God of the dust. Our body is earthly. Medical students can tell us that the elements in our body are the same as the elements in dust. What is in the dust is also in our bodies because our bodies are bodies of dust. Then God

breathed the breath of life into this body of dust. This means that God created man with two elements. The first element was dust, and the second element was the breath of life. One element was physical, and the other was spiritual. The physical body can be touched and can be seen, but the breath of life is invisible and untouchable. When God breathed the breath of life into this body of dust, something came out—a living soul. The breath of life entering into the body of dust produced a man as a living soul. This breath of life is the human spirit. Proverbs 20:27 tells us that the spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah. The Hebrew word in this verse for *spirit* is the same word in Genesis 2:7 for *breath*. This tells us that the breath breathed into man's body became the spirit of man. Thus, in the first two chapters of Genesis we have a clear picture that man was made according to God, that he was a copy of God, and that man was created with a human spirit.

Now we need to ask why God created man in His own image, making man a copy of Himself, and why God created man with a spirit. God's economy is the answer to these questions. John 4:24 tells us that God is Spirit and that we must worship Him in spirit. Only the spirit can worship the Spirit. God created man in His own image, according to His own likeness, with a spirit to worship Him and contact Him because of His divine economy. The divine economy is to carry out the divine dispensing of God into man. God created man in His own image so that He could dispense Himself into man, and God created man with a spirit so that He could dispense Himself into man.

A container is always made according to its contents. A round box was meant to contain something round, whereas a square box was meant to contain something square. God made man as a copy of Himself with the intention that man would be His container. In Romans 9 Paul tells us that God created man as a vessel (vv. 21, 23), a container to contain God. From the time that I was twenty years old, for seven and a half years, I was with some very knowledgeable teachers of the Bible. They taught me the dispensations, the prophecies, and the typologies. This was all very good. But they never told me that God made man as His container. We all need to see that we were made to contain God. When I was a little boy, I attended Sunday school. I was told the story of God's creation and many stories of Jesus, but I was never told that I was made to be God's container. Christian teachers teach many things. They may teach us that we have to love our neighbors, that the wives should be submissive to the husbands, that the husbands should love the wives, that the children should honor their parents, that the parents should not provoke

their children, that the servants should be faithful, and that the masters need to be kind. Many of us were taught these things in the past, but we were never told that we were made to contain God. This is wonderful! We all need to have the realization to declare, “I am a container of God!” God wants to be our contents. The God who is love, light, holiness, and righteousness is our contents! We have to be filled with Him.

We must realize that God is a Spirit. God is invisible in the same way that electricity is invisible. Edison invented the light bulb to express electricity. In like manner, radio waves are invisible, and in those waves there may be some Japanese music or some Italian singing. Within a radio there is a receiver to receive these waves that contain the music and the singing. Man is just like a radio with a receiver to receive the invisible God. One day God “tuned our spirit” to receive Him, the invisible Spirit. Our human spirit is the receiver for us to receive “the heavenly music,” the invisible God. We can exercise our spirit, our inner receiver, to receive the heavenly divine transmission of the wonderful Triune God. When we sing to the Lord, when we pray and call upon the name of the Lord, the “heavenly electricity” gets into us to make us “crazy” with the enjoyment of Christ. We were made as copies of God to contain Him, and we were created with a spirit, which is the receiver for us to receive God the Spirit as the “heavenly radio waves.”

A GOD-MAN, NOT A GOOD MAN

When I was a young man, I did everything quickly. I spoke quickly, and I walked quickly. When you are a quick person, it is easy for you to lose your temper. When I wanted to do something quickly and another person was going slowly, I became irritated. Then I got saved when I was nineteen. My sister returned home from a seminary where she was studying. She loved the Lord and wanted to go on with the Lord. She told me that she saw many “spiritual” Christians in her seminary. She related to me that these Christians did everything slowly. They walked slowly, they opened up the Bible slowly, and they talked slowly. After hearing that testimony, I desired to be a slow person, and I began to hate my quickness. Then I began to imitate the persons who were so slow. I tried to pick up my Bible slowly, walk slowly, and even read the Bible slowly. But eventually, my quickness came out again. I found out that I was not a slow person. For me to try to be a slow person was like a monkey trying to imitate a man. Eventually, the monkey will return to being a monkey.

Then I was taught by many Christian teachers that I should be patient, humble, and kind. I was taught that I should be very virtuous. Eventually, I discovered that I could not love, I could not be humble, and I could not be patient, kind, holy, or righteous. I became very disappointed and struggled for a long time. One day I saw that man can never be holy. Only God can be holy. There is no possibility for a piece of black iron to be gold. I saw that what God wanted was to enter into me to be my contents, to be my holiness, to be my “gold.” When I saw and realized this, I became greatly excited. I wanted to tell everyone that I had God in me, that God was my contents. God is my life, my holiness, my love, my slowness, and my everything. I am a vessel, a container, to contain God and to be filled with God.

I used to tell people that I wanted to be a good man, but I could not make it. But today I can testify that I am not a good man. Do not be a good man, but be a God-man. If you want to be a good man, be sure that you will be a bad man. Do not try in yourself to love others. The more you try to love others, the more you will eventually hate others. If you try to be humble, you will be proud. You may even have the inward attitude—“Don’t you know that I am so humble?” This is pride. You are proud of your humility. You have to forget about being a good man.

In the garden of Eden there were two trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9). Evil always goes with good. Hatred goes with love. Pride goes with humility. This is not what God wants. God wants life. God does not want you to be a good man, but God wants you to be a God-man. You may be a “good man,” but you can never be an expression of God if you are merely a good man. God made man in His own image for the purpose of expressing God. When we become a God-man who is filled with God, we express God. A God-man is an expression of God.

Such a God-man, expressing God, is God’s representative. He represents God, and he has God’s authority over all things. God created man in His own image to express Him, and God gave His dominion to man that man may reign for Him (1:26). It is not a good man but a God-man who expresses God and represents God. God’s image is for us to express God, and God’s dominion is for us to represent God. We have God Himself in our spirit, and we can be filled with God and full of God to express Him and represent Him as a God-man. This is the dispensing of God Himself into us according to the divine economy.

EATING THE TREE OF LIFE

After God created man in His image with a spirit to contain Him, God put this man in front of the tree of life and charged him to be careful not to eat the wrong tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:16-17). God wanted man to eat of the tree of life. In the Gospel of John we see that the Lord is the vine tree (15:1) and that He is the life (14:6). When we put these two matters together, we see that Jesus is the tree of life. He is the tree and He is the life, so He is the tree of life. We have to receive Him by our spirit, and we can receive Him by eating Him and drinking Him. He told us that He is the bread of life for us to eat. By eating Him we can live because of Him (6:57). Also, He is the living water for us to drink (4:14; 7:37-38).

What is it to eat Jesus and to drink of Jesus? This is God's dispensing of Himself into our being. God created man in His own image with a spirit so that man might receive Him. At the time of creation, man did not have God within him. Man was just an empty container. Adam was empty without God in him, so God put him in front of the tree of life. Adam was an empty container made to contain God as life. He needed to receive God into him so that God would be his life, his life supply, and his contents. In the same way God needs to be our contents, our life, and our life supply. We should not receive the wrong tree. The Lord warned Adam that if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die. We need to receive the right item into us, and the right thing for us to receive is the tree of life. The tree of life indicates that God wants to be our life. We have to receive Him by eating Him. If we eat of Christ as the tree of life, we will receive Him into our being to be our life supply, and we will no longer be empty. God will be our contents.

Genesis 1 and 2 give us a picture in God's creation, showing us the divine economy. Even in God's creation there is a picture of God's desire to dispense Himself into His created man. I must testify that my only burden and my unique interest is God's economy. God wants to dispense Himself into us to make us God-men, not good men. A Christian is not merely a good man but a God-man. We were made in God's image with a spirit to receive God into us as our life, our life supply, and our everything to be our very contents for us to be God-men.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DIVINE ECONOMY IN GOD'S CREATION (2)

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:8-14, 18-24; Psa. 46:4-5; 36:8

THE IMAGE OF GOD, THE SPIRIT OF MAN, AND THE TREE OF LIFE

Genesis 1 and 2 are undoubtedly a record of God's creation. But as we have seen, these two chapters do not convey only the thought of God's creation. After receiving the light, we can see that something much more is conveyed in this part of the Word. The crucial matter conveyed in Genesis 1 and 2 is the divine economy. It is easy to understand how God created the heavens and the earth, but it is not so easy to understand why God created man in His own image, why God created man with a human spirit, and why after creating man He put him in front of the tree of life. These are three crucial points: the image of God, the spirit of man, and the tree of life. To understand Genesis 1 and 2 we must understand these marvelous, crucial, and vital points.

When we see the divine economy, we will realize that God created man in His image so that He could dispense Himself into man. God also created man with a spirit so that He could dispense Himself into man. Finally, God put man in front of the tree of life in order that man could receive Him into his being as life. Within the first twenty years of my study of the Bible, I did not see this. Genesis 1 and 2 were merely a story of creation to me. I was unable to understand the significance of the image of God, the spirit of man, and the tree of life. About forty years ago, I began to see the tree of life, the image of God, and the spirit of man. After seeing all these matters in Genesis 1 and 2, I was somewhat beside myself. We have to realize that we bear the image of God. We look like God. We also have a spirit to receive God as our life. This is all for God's economy to dispense Himself into us. This is the main thought of the record in Genesis 1 and 2.

THE GARDEN AND THE RIVER

Genesis 2:8 furthermore tells us that God planted a garden. The garden that God planted was in Eden, which means "delight" or "pleasure." God put

man in an environment of pleasure and delight, full of enjoyment. God put man into this garden and placed him in front of the tree of life. This indicated that God wanted man to receive Him into his being to be man's life. The pleasant God wanted to enter into man to be man's pleasant life.

In addition to the tree of life, the picture in Genesis 2 shows us that there was also a river that went forth from Eden to water the garden (v. 10). An environment where there are trees with a river is an environment pleasant with life. Life is in the tree, and life is flowing in the water. God put man in front of the tree of life, and along with this tree a river was flowing. Thus far, we have seen a man made in the image of God with a human spirit that was able to receive God. Then this man was in front of the tree of life by the side of a river. This tree was "pleasant to the sight and good for food" (v. 9). We need to see the picture in Genesis 2 of a man bearing God's image, having a human spirit to receive God, placed in front of a tree that was flourishing, green, and full of life, and beside a river of flowing water.

Wherever there is the eternal life, there is always the flow of the living water. John 6 shows us that Jesus is the bread of life (v. 35) with the riches of life for us to eat (v. 57). Then John 7 tells us that whoever believes in Jesus and receives His life will have rivers of living water flowing out of his innermost being (v. 38). In John 6 is the bread of life with the riches of life, and in John 7 are the rivers flowing with living water. These two chapters show us that when we receive the divine life, this life flows in our being as a river of living water. This is the significance of the tree of life and the river in Genesis 2.

GOLD, BDELLIUM, AND ONYX STONE FOR THE BUILDING OF GOD

At the flow of the river there were gold, bdellium, and onyx stone (v. 12). Bdellium is a kind of pearl, but it is not produced from the oysters out of the ocean. It is a kind of pearl produced from a tree's secretion. When the resin of the tree, the tree's life secretion, the tree's sap, congeals into gum, this gum is considered as a transparent pearl. Bdellium is a pearl produced by the plant life, not by the animal life. Onyx stone is a most precious stone. The picture in Genesis 2 shows us the tree of life and a river of water, and at the flow of this river are gold, pearl from the plant life, and onyx stone. We need to ask what the significance of this picture is.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3 that he had laid the unique foundation, which is Jesus Christ, but now we must be careful how we build upon this foundation (vv. 10-11). We have to build upon this foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones (v. 12). In Genesis 2 there is gold, bdellium, and onyx stone, and in 1 Corinthians 3 Paul refers to gold, silver, and precious stones. To build up the church there is the need of gold, of silver, and of precious stones. At the end of the Bible in the book of Revelation, the holy city, New Jerusalem, is built with three items—gold, pearls, and precious stones (21:18-21). In three portions of the divine revelation—Genesis, 1 Corinthians, and Revelation—there are three materials. Gold and precious stones are listed in these three books. But the second material in Genesis is bdellium, in 1 Corinthians is silver, and in Revelation is pearl.

It is significant that three items are listed. The number three has a spiritual significance in the Bible. It denotes the Triune God, and it also denotes resurrection on the third day. Therefore, three in the Bible denotes the Triune God in resurrection. The Jews and the Muslims believe in God. They believe in the God who created the universe, and we also believe in God. The Jews and the Muslims believe in the God of creation, but we believe in the God not only of creation but also in resurrection. The God we believe in is not only the creating God but also the God in resurrection. This is a tremendous difference. The God in creation never became a man. But the Triune God in resurrection became a man, lived on this earth as a man, passed through death, and was resurrected. Our God is not only the God in creation but the very God who became a man, lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years, died on the cross, and was resurrected. Today He is the very Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—in resurrection. The God in creation created the universe, but the God in resurrection regenerates us and transforms us to make us a new creation. As the God in creation, He created us, but as the God in resurrection, He regenerates and transforms us to make us a new creation. We were once the old creation, but now we are a new creation in resurrection.

Adam was made by God of the dust of the ground. He was a dusty man placed in front of the tree of life. We also are men of dust, but by partaking of Christ as the tree of life, the river of water of life will flow within us and transform us into precious material for God's building. Spiritually, we are being transformed from a man of dust to a man of gold. In the previous chapter we saw that God does not desire us to be good men but God-men. We not only need to be God-men but also gold men. As a Christian, you must be a

God-man and a gold man. In the Divine Trinity are the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Gold signifies the nature of the Father; bdellium and pearls signify the produce of the Son, the second in the Trinity; and onyx stone, precious stone, signifies the third in the Trinity, the Spirit.

We have already pointed out that bdellium is a pearl produced from the plant life and not from the animal life. The shedding of the blood from the animal life is required for redemption, but with the plant life there is no thought of redemption. In Genesis 1 and 2 sin had not yet come in, and man had not fallen. Thus, there was no need of redemption, but there was still the need of the secretion of the life-juice. Thus, bdellium signifies that the Son of God had to be a tree to be broken to secrete His life-juice to produce bdellium. In the Bible the plant life signifies the producing, multiplying, and propagating life.

When the Lord died on the cross, He was broken. A soldier pierced His side with a spear, and there came out blood and water (John 19:34). Two things came out of the Lord's side—blood for redemption and water for life secretion. In Genesis 2 there was only the need of the secretion of life. There was no need of the shedding of blood, because in Genesis 2 there was no sin. In John 19 from the side of the broken Jesus, blood came out for redemption, dealing with sins (1:29; Heb. 9:22) for the purchase of the church (Acts 20:28), and water came out for the secretion of the life-juice, for imparting life, dealing with death (John 12:24; 3:14-15) for the producing of the church (Eph. 5:29-32).

Silver signifies the redeeming Christ with all the virtues of His person and work. Today the Son of God is signified in God's building as the silver. With bdellium there is the thought of life secretion only, but with silver there is the thought of redemption, which includes the shedding of blood and the secretion of life.

In the consummation of the Bible there is neither bdellium nor silver but pearls. Pearls are something produced by the animal life of the oyster. Pearls imply the thought of redemption and the thought of life secretion to the uttermost. Pearls are produced by the oysters in the waters of death. When the oyster is wounded by a particle of sand, it secretes its life-juice around the sand and makes it a precious pearl. In eternity future we will still be reminded that the Son of God came into the death waters as the living One, the oyster,

and was crucified, being wounded by us to redeem us and to secrete His life over us to make us precious pearls for the building of God's eternal expression.

The tree of life signifies Christ as our life received into us. Then the Spirit as the river of water of life flows within us. The result of this flow is that we are transformed into precious materials. In the spiritual sense, gold, bdellium, and onyx stone all signify transformation. The old creation gets transformed to be the new creation. The Lord wants to transform us from a dusty man into a gold man with bdellium and onyx stone. We have to believe that the Lord has added some amount of gold, bdellium or silver, and onyx stone into our being. This is not merely creation but transformation in resurrection by the Triune God. We need to praise and thank the Lord for the transformation of the Triune God in resurrection. This is God's economy. The tree of life, the river of water, the gold, the bdellium, and onyx stone are all for God's economy. This is to dispense the Triune God into His created man.

The ultimate consummation of God's eternal economy is the New Jerusalem, the eternal building of God, builded with transformed materials of gold, pearls, and precious stones through the dispensing of the Triune God into His chosen and redeemed people. I hope we can spend some time to pray over the verses and the fellowship in this chapter until all these points get into us. We need to worship the Lord that He is the tree of life and the life-giving Spirit as the river of water of life flowing within us. Thank the Lord that He is now transforming us into gold, bdellium, and onyx stone. After a number of years many of us will possess more of the Triune God as gold, bdellium, and onyx stones, and the church life will bear a strong testimony of the Triune God in resurrection.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DIVINE ECONOMY

IN CHRIST AS THE TREE OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: Psa. 36:9; John 1:1-2, 4; 6:35; 10:10b; 15:1; Col. 3:4a;
Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14

The Bible is a book of the divine mysteries. As we have seen, the first mystery in the Bible is the divine economy. But this mystery has been missed, lost, and buried for centuries. Thank the Lord that in these last days He has opened up this mystery to us. We can even see such a mystery in the first two chapters of the Bible. Here the divine economy has been sown in the Word as a seed. Many of the divine truths in the divine revelation are sown in Genesis as seeds, and in the following books of the Bible these seeds grow and develop. Whatever is revealed in Genesis is developed throughout all the books of the Bible until the last book, the book of Revelation, where there is the harvest of all these truths.

The truth concerning the tree of life is sown in Genesis 2, and this truth is reaped in Revelation 22. In between Genesis and Revelation there is the development of the truth concerning the tree of life. The tree of life is for God to dispense Himself into His chosen people. The tree of life signifies God Himself as life to us. God Himself desires to be our life. We have to realize that life is mysterious, abstract, and altogether invisible. You cannot see life, but it is so real, living, organic, and powerful. Our physical life is an invisible entity, but it can be realized. Life is living, organic, vigorous, energetic, and powerful.

THE EMBODIMENT OF LIFE

God desires to be life to us, but how can we realize and touch this life? It is for this reason that God as life has to be embodied. Electricity is real and powerful, but no one can see it. For the electricity to be appropriated and applied, the electricity needs to be embodied. A cable or a wire is the embodiment of electricity. The electricity is embodied in the wire. When we have the wire or the cable, we have electricity. In like manner, the tree of life

is the embodiment of life. The tree is the embodiment of the divine life just as your physical body is the embodiment of your physical life. The tree of life is the embodiment of God as life, the embodiment of the divine life. The Bible reveals that the embodiment of the divine life is Jesus. Where is God? He is embodied in Jesus. Outside of Jesus there is no God. Outside of Jesus you cannot see God or find God. This is the same as saying that outside of the cable or wire you cannot see electricity or find electricity. God is embodied in Jesus, and this very God embodied in Jesus is life. This embodied God makes Jesus the tree of life.

In the Old Testament the tree of life is mentioned only once. Its mentioning in Genesis 2 is a seed of the divine truth sown there. Due to the fall of man, there is a long history of silence concerning the tree of life. Then in the New Testament we are told that God became a man. The Word in the beginning was God Himself, and this very God became flesh, a man in the flesh by the name of Jesus. In John 1:4 we are told that “in Him was life.” When God became a man, life was no longer abstract. Life was embodied in the flesh. In Jesus was life. The tree is the flesh, and the flesh is the tree. John tells us that the apostles saw this tree and touched this tree (1 John 1:1). When they touched Jesus, they touched the tree of life. They received life because in Him was life. He told us that He came that we may have life and that we may have life abundantly (John 10:10b). He did not only want us to have a small amount of life but the abundance of life. Jesus is the divine life embodied. In Him was life. Life was His content.

From my youth I was taught by many Christian teachers that Jesus came to save sinners. First Timothy 1:15 tells us that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is a wonderful fact in the Scriptures, but very few Christian teachers told me that Jesus came that we may have life. Jesus came not only to be our Savior but also to be the embodiment of life. When we believed in Him, we not only got saved, but we also received the divine life because He is the embodiment of this life.

THE BREAD OF LIFE

One day the Lord Jesus told people that He is the bread of life (John 6:35). He is not only life but the bread of life so that we can eat Him. The bread of life is the life supply in the form of food, like the tree of life (Gen. 2:9), which is also the life supply “good for food.” We need to realize that Jesus is eatable.

I was a Christian for many years and never heard that I could eat Jesus. In John 6:57 the Lord Jesus said, “He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.” The bread of life is surely something eatable. For Jesus to tell us that He is the bread of life implies that He is eatable, and He told us directly that we can eat Him. We live because of Him when we eat Him. We live by what we eat. My eating three times a day helps me to be energetic and vigorous. Dieticians tell us that we are what we eat. The more we eat Jesus, the more we become Jesus. We live by what we eat, and we are what we eat.

THE VINE TREE

Jesus also told us that He is the true vine (15:1). He is the vine tree. We all know that a vine tree is not a tall tree. If Jesus were such a high and tall tree, His fruit would not be available to us. But Jesus is a vine tree who is so available for man to eat and enjoy. He is not a tall tree but a long tree. In John 15 Jesus told us that He is the vine, then in Revelation 22:2 we see that the one tree of life grows on the two sides of the river, which signifies that the tree of life is a vine, spreading and proceeding along the flow of the water of life for God’s people to receive and enjoy.

The New Jerusalem is a square city. Its length, breadth, and height are all twelve thousand stadia (21:16). A stadion equals about six hundred feet, so twelve thousand stadia is about thirteen hundred and fifty miles. The New Jerusalem is a mountain on the top of which is the throne of God. Out of this throne proceeds a river of water of life (22:1), and along the river grows the tree of life. The river begins from the throne and reaches all the twelve gates of the city. In order to do this the river must spiral its way through the entire city to reach all the twelve gates. The vine tree begins from the throne and grows spirally around the mountain along the banks of the river. Eventually, it passes through all the twelve gates.

How long is this vine tree? This vine reaches every corner of the inhabited earth. It is long enough to reach Argentina, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, Paraguay, Colombia, Bolivia, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Greece, Turkey, Russia, China, Korea, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Jesus as the marvelous vine tree is growing around the globe. It is not a tall tree from the earth to the heavens, but it is a long tree growing spirally around the globe. Jesus is not a pine tree but a vine tree spreading and growing over the entire earth. In John 15 the Lord Jesus told us directly that He is the vine, and in

Revelation 22 the tree of life is a vine. We should not think that there are two vines. There is only one vine, one tree of life. This vine tree is in Genesis 2 as the tree of life and in John 15 as the true vine, and in Revelation 22 it is growing spirally around the mountain of the New Jerusalem to reach all God's chosen and redeemed people. We must be brought into the realization and into the vision of the Lord Jesus as the tree of life, the embodiment of the divine life, the long and spreading vine tree.

ENJOYING THE TREE OF LIFE TODAY AS THE FORETASTE

In Genesis 2 there was the tree of life, and in Revelation 22 there will be the vine tree, the tree of life. On the one hand, the tree of life was an item in the past. On the other hand, the tree of life will be an item in the future. But we must also realize the good news that the eating of the tree of life is something for today. Revelation 2:7 says, "To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God." The tree of life is available in the church life today. There is a basic principle in the New Testament that what we will enjoy in the future we should enjoy in this age, and what we enjoy in this age will be our enjoyment in the future.

In the New Testament there is the principle of the foretaste. The foretaste is a sign of the full taste to come. God has prepared the tree of life for our eternal enjoyment, but today we have to enjoy the tree of life as a foretaste. If we do not have the foretaste today, we could never have the full taste in the next age, the age of the kingdom. Undoubtedly, we will enjoy the tree of life in the New Jerusalem in the future as the full taste. But today in the church life we can enjoy the tree of life in the way of a foretaste. If we do not enjoy the Lord Jesus today as the tree of life in the way of a foretaste, we will miss the particular enjoyment of Him as the tree of life in the New Jerusalem in the coming millennial kingdom as a reward to the overcoming believers.

The Paradise of God in Revelation 2:7 refers to the New Jerusalem, of which the church is a foretaste today. Today's church life is a miniature of the Paradise of God, the New Jerusalem. The church life is a small paradise. In this paradise we enjoy Christ as the tree of life. Without eating, there is no enjoyment. To eat of the tree of life, that is, to enjoy Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life. In today's Christendom there is very little eating and very little enjoyment of Christ. In the Lord's recovery we need to have the enjoyment of Christ every day. All day long we need to eat

Jesus and drink of Jesus. While we are enjoying the foretaste of the tree of life, we are looking for the full taste to come. We are enjoying Him by eating Him as the tree of life and the bread of life.

ABIDING IN HIM AND HE IN US

We not only eat Him, but we also are united to Him. We are now His branches and are a part of the great vine. We enjoy the fruit of this vine, and we also enjoy the very life-juice as the branches. We are not only the eaters but also the branches. As the branches of the great vine, we can abide in Him, and He abides in us. What an enjoyment! We not only eat Him, but we also abide in Him. Christ as the tree of life is for the divine economy to dispense God Himself into you and me. As the branches of this great vine, we are abiding in Him, and He is abiding in us. Then there is a dispensing of God into us, a dispensing of life from the tree into the branches. The tree of life is the very embodiment of God as life to us. Now we are united to Him organically. As we abide in Him and He abides in us, this embodied God is dispensing Himself into us to make us God-men. Furthermore, this embodied God is dispensing the divine gold into us to make us gold men. Praise Him for the divine dispensing of the divine gold into our being to make us all gold men! Praise Him for the tree of life, the embodiment of God as life, to be eaten and enjoyed by us to make us men of life!

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DIVINE ECONOMY

IN THE SPIRIT AS THE RIVER

Scripture Reading: Exo. 17:6; Psa. 46:4; 65:9a; 36:8; Ezek. 47:5, 9; John 4:14; 7:37-39; Rev. 21:6; 22:1-2, 17

THE TREE OF LIFE—THE EMBODIMENT OF LIFE

We have seen that after God created man, He put him into a garden. In that garden there are two striking items: the tree of life and a flowing river. The tree and the river are for God's dispensing. God created man in His own image with a human spirit, yet at that time man did not have the life of God. Man was only created by God and was an empty vessel ready to contain God. Thus, man was put in front of the tree of life for God to dispense Himself into man. Man was to receive God as his contents. God as life desired to come into man to be man's contents. Therefore, the New Testament tells us that if we do not have God (the Son), we do not have life (1 John 5:12). Our human life is not a long life. It is not a life that lasts forever but a temporary life. The everlasting life, the eternal life, is God Himself. We human beings need to have God's everlasting, eternal life as our contents. This God who is life wants to dispense Himself as the divine life into man.

God and life are abstract, so this abstract God who is life needed an embodiment. This embodiment of the divine life is the tree of life, which is a picture of Jesus as the embodiment of God to be life to us. One day God came in the flesh, and this God-man's name was Jesus. The man Jesus was the embodiment of God as life, so John says that in Him, in Jesus, in the embodiment of God, was life (John 1:4). Jesus also told us that He is life (14:6), and He came that we may have life and have it abundantly (10:10). Furthermore, He told us that He is the bread of life to supply us and that we can receive Him by eating Him (6:35, 57). Eventually, Jesus is revealed in the Gospel of John as the vine tree, which is the tree of life (15:1). By receiving Him, by eating Him, we become a part of Him; we become a branch of this great vine.

In 1958 I was invited to England and stayed there for about one month. One day a friend took me to see the so-called great vine of the queen. The queen of England has a great vine tree in a greenhouse. Someone asked me if I had ever seen such a great vine. I replied that this vine did not surprise me, because I had seen a bigger one. The Queen's vine may be about a hundred feet long, but the vine that I had seen is so long that it encircles the globe. The vine that I had seen was Jesus with all His branches. All the millions upon millions of believers are the branches of this great and long vine around the globe. What a great vine tree! The brothers and sisters in the churches are all the green branches of the great vine tree. We have become the branches of Christ because we have received Him, we have eaten Him, and we are still eating Him. We are eating Jesus every day, and we are growing by Him. When we enter into the state of being the New Jerusalem, the tree of life should not be something new to us, because we will have eaten and enjoyed this tree already. We have seen that the tree of life is the focal point of the entire Bible. This tree of life, the very embodiment of God as life to us, is for God's economy to dispense Himself into His created, chosen, and redeemed people. I hope that we all have a clear vision of the tree of life as the embodiment of the divine life for God to dispense Himself into us.

THE RIVER OF WATER OF LIFE—THE FLOW OF LIFE

In this chapter we want to see the second crucial item in the garden—the flowing river. The tree is the embodiment, and the river is the flow. God is abstract and mysterious. Anything that is mysterious and abstract needs an embodiment. Even our human life needs a body to be its embodiment. The human life is embodied in our body, but this body needs a flow. We need to ask what the flow of our human life is. First, the current of the blood within us is the flow of our human life. When the current of blood stops, this means death. Second, our breathing is also the flow of our human life. If we stop breathing, we die. Our life flows inwardly by the blood and outwardly by our breath. We breathe all day long, and our blood flows all day long. We have to breathe, and our blood has to circulate freely for us to be healthy. The tree of life is the embodiment of life, but in order for this life to enter into us, there is the need for it to flow. If this life does not flow, it cannot enter into us.

The cow life is embodied in the cow, so a cow is the embodiment of the cow life. But how can this cow life enter into us? The cow life needs a flow, and that flow is the milk. We can receive the cow life by drinking the milk. When a

farmer milks a cow, the cow flows, and this flow is “a river of milk.” The milk of the cow is the river, the flow. Many children enjoy drinking the milk of the cow. The river of the cow is the milk.

When the children of Israel were traveling through the wilderness, there was no water. Then God told Moses to strike the rock, and this cleft rock flowed out living water for the people to drink (Exo. 17:6). In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul tells us that the rock that followed the children of Israel in the wilderness was Christ (v. 4). That rock was the embodiment of God, just like the tree of life. God was embodied in that rock, but how could that rock get into the people? The rock had to flow, so the living water flowed out of the rock for all the people to drink. When they drank of that rock, they drank of God. The water flowing out of the rock was the flowing of the divine life, just like the milk is the flowing of the cow life.

Whenever we drink milk, we have to realize that this milk is the cow life flowing. The cow milk is the flow of the cow life. My mother worked for an American pastor. Whenever we children went to our pastor’s home, I smelled a cow. One day I asked my mother why I smelled a cow when I went to the pastor’s home. My mother replied, “Don’t you realize that the Americans drink cow milk? The more they drink cow milk, the more they smell like a cow.” If we drink the “milk of Jesus” every day, eventually we will smell like Jesus. The milk of Jesus is the river of the divine life. The milk and the cow are one. The milk and the cow are not two things but one thing in two stages. When the cow flows out, it becomes the milk. The milk in a glass is the flowing out of the cow. Thus, when we drink milk, we are drinking of the cow. In the garden there was the tree of life as the embodiment of the divine life, but this life has to flow out and into us for God’s dispensing. Along with the tree there is a river flowing, indicating that the divine life is flowing out for us to drink. When we drink of this river, the divine life is dispensed into our being.

The tree of life and the river of life are for God’s dispensing. God as the very divine life desires to dispense Himself into us. We have to understand the Bible not merely according to the letter but according to the divine light so that we can see this marvelous picture of the tree of life with the river of life, which depicts that God is embodied and that God flows out and into us for the dispensing of Himself into our being.

In John 6 the Lord Jesus told people that He is the bread of life for people to eat (vv. 48, 57). Many of the Jews could not understand this. They said that this word was hard (v. 60). Then the Lord Jesus went on to tell the disciples, “It is the Spirit who gives life” (v. 63). It is not the flesh that gives life but the Spirit who gives life. This is like saying that it is not the big cow that gives us the cow life but the milk of the cow that does. For a little child to eat a big cow is impossible. For a little baby to enjoy a big cow, he needs to drink the milk of the cow. The cow flows milk, and this milk nourishes the baby. The flesh profits nothing; it is the Spirit who gives life. Jesus is the embodiment of God, and the Spirit is the flow of God. Along with the tree is the river, and along with Jesus is the Spirit.

In John 7 the Lord Jesus said that those who were thirsty should come to Him and drink. If we drink of Him, rivers of living water will flow out from within us. Verse 39 tells us that He said this “concerning the Spirit.” The Spirit will flow out of Jesus for His believers to drink of. When we drink of this Spirit, we enjoy the river, and rivers of living water will flow out of our innermost being. In Exodus we see the cleft rock out of which came the living water (17:6). Then Psalm 46:4 tells us that there is a river whose streams gladden the city of God. The city of God in the Psalms signifies the church. There is a river whose streams gladden the church. What makes us happy in the church is the river. The river is Jesus flowing, just like the milk is the cow flowing. We all are like the newborn babes drinking of the river of milk (1 Pet. 2:2). This river makes us all glad. Praise the Lord that there is a river that makes the city of God happy. Psalm 65:9a indicates that this river is the river of God. The river in Genesis 2 is the river of God.

In a positive sense, God is like a great cow. He is the source of life, and the heavenly milk comes out of this great cow to become a river of milk. This is the river of the cow. In the same way, the river of our God is full of the water of life to satisfy us, quench our thirst, and make us glad. When we drink of this river, sometimes we get beside ourselves with enjoyment. Psalm 36:8 says that we drink of the river of God’s pleasures. In Ezekiel 47 waters issued out of the temple of God (v. 1), which eventually became a deep river (v. 5). Wherever the river came, everything lived (v. 9). The flow of this river made everything living. When this river comes to a certain country, it makes that country living; it makes city after city in that country living. Praise the Lord for this river that brings life wherever it goes!

In the Gospel of John the Lord Jesus told the Samaritan woman that “whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life” (4:14). Then the Lord Jesus told us that whoever drinks of Him will have rivers of living water flowing out of his innermost being (7:38). The rivers of living water are the many flows of the different aspects of life (cf. Rom. 15:30; 1 Thes. 1:6; 2 Thes. 2:13; Gal. 5:22-23), originating from the one unique river of water of life (Rev. 22:1), which is God’s Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2).

At the end of the New Testament it is revealed that in the New Jerusalem there is a river of water of life (Rev. 22:1). That river is the consummation of all the rivers in the Bible. The river began in Genesis 2 and consummates in Revelation 22. This river is the river of God that flows the divine life. This river is the Spirit. The fountain of life is God the Father, the spring is the Son who is the embodiment of life, the embodiment of the fountain, and the Spirit is the flow of life as the river that reaches us. This is God dispensing Himself into us. When we drink of the divine river, we receive the flow, the spring, and the fountain—the very Triune God. In this way the Triune God dispenses Himself as life into our being.

We are drinking of the river that flows out of the spring, and this spring is the very embodiment of the fountain. God the Father is embodied in the Son, the Son is flowing by the Spirit, and the Spirit reaches us as the living water for our enjoyment. This is God dispensing Himself into our being to make us the same as He is. The divine Father has many divine children in one divine family. This is the church life, which is the issue of the Triune God’s dispensing of Himself as life into our being in His divine economy. Praise the Lord for such a divine economy! Praise the Lord for the tree of life! And praise the Lord for the river flowing!

CHAPTER SIX

THE DIVINE ECONOMY IN CHRIST'S INCARNATION AND HUMAN LIVING WITH THE FATHER AND IN THE CONCEPTION AND MINISTRY OF JESUS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: John 1:1, 14, 16-18; 5:43a; 6:46; 7:29; 16:27b; 8:16, 29;
16:32; 14:9-11; 10:30; 6:57a; 5:30b, 36b; 10:37; 14:24b; 10:25b; 7:18; Luke
1:31-35; Matt. 1:18-23; 3:16-17; 12:28; Luke 4:14, 18-19; Acts 10:38; Heb.
9:14

Thus far we have covered three main items—the divine economy, the embodiment of God, and the flow of God. The embodiment of God and the flow of God are both for the divine economy. For God to dispense Himself into His chosen people, He needs to be embodied, and He also needs to flow out. In this chapter we want to go on further to see how God is embodied in Jesus. Jesus as the tree of life is God's embodiment. Because God is Spirit (John 4:24a), He is mysterious and abstract. Before Christ's incarnation there was no way for people to contact God. But in God's wisdom He became embodied in a man by the name of Jesus. In the history of mankind there was a man among men who was God's embodiment. If you touch that man, you touch God. If you receive that man, you receive God. If you have that man, you have God. God is no longer abstract but is embodied in the man Jesus. God is no more mysterious but manifested, no more invisible but now touchable. Our God today is the embodied God, the manifested God, the touchable God, and this touchable God is a man by the name of Jesus.

The main purpose of the Gospel of John is to show us the embodiment of God. It gives us a full record of how God has embodied Himself in this man, Jesus. John wrote his Gospel in a simple way, but all the points conveyed in it are marvelous, profound, and mysterious. Most of the verses in the Scripture Reading are not studied by many Bible readers or teachers. Many Christians have known John 3:16 from their youth. But how many know John 6:46 and 5:30? Many verses in the Gospel of John are neglected and missed, but we

have to come to these verses to see the very embodiment of God in this man Jesus.

Christ's incarnation was with the Father, and His human living was also with the Father. His incarnation refers to His birth, and His human living refers to His life while He was on this earth. Jesus as the embodiment of God was born to live on this earth, and His birth and His life on this earth were both for God's dispensing in the divine economy. The divine dispensing is the main factor of Jesus' birth and life on this earth.

In His birth Jesus brought the Father with Him. Many of us may have never realized that when Jesus came through incarnation, He came with the Father. The little babe born in the manger was with the Father. Furthermore, when Jesus was living on this earth, He was always with the Father. He was never alone. When He was traveling from village to village, from Judea to Samaria, from Samaria to Galilee, He was never alone, because the Father was always with Him. He was always traveling with the Father.

CHRIST'S INCARNATION WITH THE FATHER

Jesus as the Son of God came in the name of the Father (5:43a). A person named Mr. Smith may have a large bank account. If I go to the bank in Mr. Smith's name, the people at the bank will call me Mr. Smith. According to the bank account, Mr. Smith is there. But according to the actual person, I am there at the bank. I am there in Mr. Smith's name. When the Son comes in the name of the Father, who comes? Isaiah 9:6 says that a Son is given to us whose name is called Eternal Father. Because I went to the bank in Mr. Smith's name, my name is called Mr. Smith. Because the Son came in the name of the Father, His name is called Eternal Father. Do not forget John 5:43a, where the Lord Jesus said, "I have come in the name of My Father."

John 1:1 tells us that the Word was God, and John 1:14 tells us that this Word became flesh. God became flesh, that is, a man, and this man is the embodiment of God. God is no longer mysterious. Now God is embodied because He became a man. We have to ask whether this God-man is the Son or the Father. We have to say that He is the Son with the Father. God became flesh, and this God is the Son with the Father. When God the Son became flesh, He became flesh with God the Father. God the Son with God the Father became flesh. We may have been told in the past that when the Son came to

be born as a man, He left the Father on the throne in heaven. But the Bible tells us that when the Son came, He came with the Father.

John 6:46 says, “Not that anyone has seen the Father, except Him who is from God, He has seen the Father.” The Greek preposition for *from* in this verse is *para*, which means “along with” or “by the side of.” John Nelson Darby points out in his New Translation that the sense of *para* in this verse is “from with.” The Son came from with the Father. He came not only from the Father but also with the Father. John 7:29 says, “I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me.” In John 16:27 the Lord Jesus said, “I came forth from God.” Again, the word *from* in these verses is *para*, and its sense is from with. The Father sent the Son, and the Son came from the Father, but He also came with the Father.

John 6:46; 7:29; and 16:27 tell us that when the Son came from the Father, He came with the Father. When the Son came, He did not come alone; He did not leave the Father in the heavens. On the day that Jesus was in the house of Simon the leper and Mary poured the precious ointment on Him (Matt. 26:6-7), He was the Son with the Father. God was embodied in Jesus because Jesus was the Son with the Father. If He were merely the Son and left the Father in the heavens when He came, He would not be the embodiment of God. But the Son was there with the Father as the embodiment of the Father, as the embodiment of God. He is the Son, He is the Father, and He is God.

CHRIST’S HUMAN LIVING WITH THE FATHER

John 8:16 says, “Even if I do judge, My judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent Me.” The Lord was not alone, but He and the Father were always together. In verse 29 of the same chapter the Lord Jesus said, “He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone.” The Sender is with the sent One. In John 16:32 the Lord Jesus said, “Behold, an hour is coming, and has come, that you will be scattered each to his own place and will leave Me alone; yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” Here are three verses telling us that the Lord Jesus was never alone while He was on this earth, because the Father was always with Him. When He was near the Sea of Galilee calling Peter and John, the Father was with Him. When He was talking with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, the Father was with Him. He always lived on this earth with the Father, and He even lived as the Father. He was never left alone.

One day Philip said to the Lord, “Show us the Father and it is sufficient for us” (14:8). Jesus’ reply to Philip was marvelous: “Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how is it that you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?” (vv. 9-10a). The Lord told Philip that if he saw Him, he saw the Father. This is because He was in the Father, and the Father was in Him; the Father was always with Him, and He was there in the name of His Father as the embodiment of God. He was not only the Son but also the Father. These matters are not merely doctrinal. The Son is the very embodiment of the Triune God as the tree of life for the Triune God to dispense Himself into all His children. Thus, when we have the Son, we have the Father (1 John 2:23), and we have the very Triune God.

In John 10:30 the Lord Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.” This is the embodiment of the Triune God. In this embodiment is the Son and the Father, even the Triune God, because God wanted to dispense Himself into His chosen people. Without such an embodiment, God would be mysterious and abstract. No one could see Him or touch Him. But here is a man who is the embodiment of the Triune God. In this man is God the Son and God the Father. When we see this man, we see God; when we touch this man, we touch God; and now we can grasp God. We can grasp the mysterious, abstract, and invisible God! Now we have God! This God has been dispensed into us and will never leave us. Praise the Lord for the divine economy!

In John 6:57 the Lord told us that the living Father sent Him and that He lived because of the Father. While He was on the earth, the Son lived because of the Father. He lived on account of, through, and by the Father. If He were on the earth, and the Father were far away in the heavens, it would have been impossible for Him to live because of the Father. But since He came with the Father and was one with the Father, He could live because of the Father and by the Father. While Jesus was walking on this earth, He lived not just by Himself but always by the Father. Actually, He did not live His life; He lived the Father’s life.

John 5:30 says, “I can do nothing from Myself; as I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.” Jesus, the Son of God, never did anything from Himself, and He never sought His own will. He sought the Father’s will, and He did the Father’s work. This marvelous person is the Son with the Father. In 5:36 He

said, “I have the testimony which is greater than that of John, for the works which the Father has given Me to finish, the works themselves which I do, testify concerning Me that the Father has sent Me.” Jesus was not doing His own work but the work which the Father had given Him to finish. John 10:37 says, “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me.” This meant that He always did the Father’s work. The Son never did His own work.

John 14:24 says, “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.” John 10:25 says, “Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe. The works which I do in My Father’s name, these testify concerning Me.” Jesus not only came in the Father’s name, but He also did His works in the Father’s name. John 7:18 says, “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, this One is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him.” This verse tells us that the Son was always seeking the Father’s glory.

From all the verses that we have pointed out, we can see that the Son came in the Father’s name, came with the Father, and lived on this earth with the Father. He spoke the Father’s word, did the Father’s work, did the Father’s will, and sought the Father’s glory. He always did everything in the Father’s name, and the Father was always with Him. Furthermore, the Father is always in Him, and He is always in the Father, so He and the Father are one. This is the marvelous way that God embodied Himself in Jesus. The Son and the Father are one, but there is still a distinction between the Son and the Father. The Son and the Father are not separate since the Son came with the Father, the Son came in the Father’s name, and the Son and the Father mutually indwell each other. They are distinctively two, but these two are one. What the Bible reveals concerning the Son with the Father is different from traditional theology. In the Lord’s recovery we do not want to follow any traditional teaching, but we want to come back to the pure Word. All the verses we have covered reveal the truth that the Son came in the Father’s name, that He came with the Father, and that He is always one with the Father as the embodiment of the Triune God for the dispensing of God Himself into our being.

THE CONCEPTION AND MINISTRY OF JESUS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Son became incarnated and lived a human life in order that God could dispense Himself into His chosen people. When the Son became incarnated to be the embodiment of God, He did so by the Spirit. Both the conception and the ministry of Jesus were by the Holy Spirit. On the one hand, God was incarnated. On the other hand, Jesus was conceived in a virgin's womb and born by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20). When Jesus was thirty years old, He came out to minister, to work for God (Luke 3:23). The Spirit descended upon Him to anoint Him and to empower Him. The Lord Jesus' ministry for God was also by the Holy Spirit. God became a man that He might dispense Himself into man, and this God is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. God and man became one. On the one hand, He is God, but on the other hand, He is also man. This is one of the most complicating matters in the New Testament. But we have to spend more time to enter into this marvelous mystery of the mingling of God with man for our experience and enjoyment of the Triune God in His dispensing.

The Conception of Jesus

The conception of any person is always by the father with the mother. But the conception of Jesus was not by a human father with a human mother but by the Holy Spirit with a human virgin. The Holy Spirit is God, so in the conception of Jesus both God and man were involved. This was the most extraordinary and special conception in all of history—a conception of God with man. In the human conception there is only one kind of essence—the human essence. But the conception of Jesus was of the divine essence and the human essence. Jesus was born of two elements—the divine element and the human element. Thus, He possessed two natures—the divine nature and the human nature. He was the complete God and the perfect man, a God-man. In Him God and man joined together and became one.

Up to the time that Jesus was born, there had never been such a person of two essences, elements, and natures to be both God and man. In Jesus you can see both God and man. God and man are not separate but are united, joined, and even mingled in the person of Jesus. God and man became one person—our wonderful Savior, Jesus Christ. Many Christians only realize that a Savior was born to mankind but not that this child born in a manger was a person who was both God and man, having both the divine and human essences, elements, and natures. Isaiah 9:6 tells us that the child born to us is called Mighty God. According to Luke, Jesus went to Jerusalem with His

parents when He was twelve years old (2:41-42). When we read this account, we must realize that this twelve-year-old boy was both God and man. His constitution, His composition, was of the divine and human elements.

The Essential and Economical Aspects of the Spirit

When Jesus was thirty years old, He began to minister (3:23). In the Old Testament a priest had to be thirty years of age, the full age for God's service (Num. 4:3, 35, 39, 43, 47). The Lord Jesus came out at the age of thirty to minister, to serve God, to preach the gospel, to carry out God's economy. At the time of John the Baptist, God ordained that all the Israelites be baptized. Jesus as a man, as one of the Israelites, had to be baptized. He could not be an exception. After Jesus was baptized, three things happened: the heavens were opened, the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove, and the Father spoke concerning the Son, "This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight" (Matt. 3:16-17).

We have pointed out that the Son came with the Father and that the Father was even in the Son. But in Matthew 3 it is recorded that after the Son was baptized, the Father spoke from the heavens. The Son and Father are not separate but one, and the Son and Father mutually indwell one another. But in Matthew 3 the Son was on the earth and the Father was in the heavens. How can we reconcile these two matters? Furthermore, we saw that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and that this Holy Spirit as the divine element was the constituent of Jesus. Jesus already had the Holy Spirit, yet the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. How can we resolve this problem?

Before the Spirit of God descended and came upon Him, the Lord Jesus was born of the Spirit (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18, 20), proving that He already had the Spirit of God within Him. That was for His birth. Now, for His ministry, the Spirit of God descended upon Him. This was the fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1; 42:1; and Psalm 45:7 to anoint the new King and introduce Him to His people.

His conception was for Him to exist. His ministry was for Him to work. Jesus was conceived and born of the Holy Spirit for His existence, but for Him to work to carry out God's ministry, He needed an extraordinary qualification. The Holy Spirit He received at His conception was for His being, His existence, and became an element of His person. He needed the essence of the

Holy Spirit in order to exist. The divine essence became the constitution of Jesus' being. This is essential. For His work, for His ministry, He needed more of the Holy Spirit; He needed the divine power of the Holy Spirit, the divine equipment. This is economical. The essence is essential, and the power is economical. Essentially, the Holy Spirit as the essence of Jesus' person can never be separated from Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in this sense never left Jesus. Economically, the Holy Spirit as the power came upon Him, not for Him to exist but to empower Him to work for God. This power may come, remain, or leave. When this power came, it did not add something to His being. When this power left, it did not mean that His being was damaged. We all need to learn these two aspects of the Spirit for Jesus' person and work—the essential aspect and the economical aspect.

For our God to dispense Himself into us is not a simple thing. What Jesus experienced, we also need to experience. We all need to be born of the Holy Spirit. This is our regeneration, our new birth, that we may have the Holy Spirit within us. Essentially at our regeneration, we received the Holy Spirit, but economically we still need the Holy Spirit. While I am speaking, I need the Holy Spirit as my power economically. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is uniquely one and was accomplished upon the Body of Christ more than nineteen hundred years ago (1 Cor. 12:13). But the experiences of the baptism in the Holy Spirit are numerous and continually shared by all the members of the Body. Peter first received the baptism (Acts 1:5, 8; 2:4) and later experienced it again and again (4:8, 31). This is for God's economy to dispense Himself into us.

The Three-one God for Our Experience

The Son came through incarnation with the Father and was conceived and born of the Spirit. He is the embodiment of the Triune God for the dispensing of Himself into His people. When we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, we do not enjoy the Son only, without the Father and without the Spirit. This is because the Son came to be embodied with the Father and by the Spirit. When we touch the Son, we touch the Father and the Spirit.

John 14:23 says, "Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." Our concept may have been that when we love the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus comes to us alone. We may have never considered

that the Lord Jesus comes to us with the Father. The Lord told us that when we love Him, the Father and He will come to abide with us. Whenever we say, "Lord Jesus," the Father comes with the Son. The Father is always with the Son, so when we call on the Son and say, "Lord Jesus, I love You," the Father comes. We all need to say, "Lord Jesus, I love You" to experience the Father coming with the Son to make an abode with us. Furthermore, when we call on the name of the Son, the Father comes, the Spirit follows, and the Son remains. We have all three, but the three are one. The three-one God is a marvelous mystery. Three are here as one for and in our experience.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DIVINE ECONOMY

IN THE ALL-INCLUSIVE DEATH OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: John 1:1, 14a, 29; 3:14; 12:24, 28, 31-33; 19:34; Rom. 8:3; 6:6; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:14; 9:26b, 28a, 14; Col. 1:15, 20; Eph. 2:15-16; Mark 15:25, 33-34; 1 John 1:7

We have seen that Christ's incarnation, human living, conception, and ministry were all related to God's economy. The man Jesus was a composition of the Triune God, the embodiment of the entire Triune God. He was with the Father, and He was fully constituted by the Holy Spirit. He was the embodiment of the Triune God, the very embodiment of life as the tree of life for us to eat so that God may dispense Himself into us, His eaters. In this chapter we want to fellowship concerning another crucial, excellent, and marvelous matter in the New Testament—the all-inclusive death of Christ. The death of Christ was not a common death but an all-inclusive death because Christ Himself is all-inclusive. As the all-inclusive One, He died an all-inclusive death.

THE NEED TO RID THE UNIVERSE OF EIGHT NEGATIVE THINGS

We may ask why there was the need of such an all-inclusive death. When Christ came with the Father and by the Spirit, there were many negative things existing in the universe. God's intention was to dispense Himself into man, but man was occupied, surrounded, and even utilized by negative things.

There are at least eight negative things in the universe that Christ needed to deal with on the cross. The first item of these negative things is Satan, the devil, God's enemy, God's adversary. Man was created by God, and God intended to dispense Himself into man. But man was captured, taken over, and usurped by Satan. Satan took man as his captive and is keeping man under his usurping hand. Along with Satan, there is the negative item of the world. The world is a satanic system and organization that occupies God's

people. The third item is sin. In this universe and on this earth, within and among men, is something personified, something living, and something powerful and very evil. This is sin. The fourth negative item is the flesh. Our flesh is evil, rotten, corrupted, ugly, and rebellious against God. The fifth negative item is the old man. Regardless of how young we are, we are still a part of the old man. The old creation is another negative item that Christ had to deal with through His death. All the items in the universe have become old. We can see the corruption in the entire creation; everything is dying or decaying. Seventh, on this earth among mankind there is no unity, no peace. There is an organization called the United Nations, but the nations are altogether not united. The nations of the world are fighting against one another, and this division comes from Babel. The final negative item, which is the last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), is death. As the people made by God for His own purpose, we were all occupied, surrounded, and taken over by these eight things. For God to dispense Himself into man, He surely had to clear up and rid the universe of these eight items.

The only way that God could clear up these eight items was by Christ's marvelous death. This wonderful person, Jesus Christ, the very embodiment of God, died to rid the universe of all these negative things. By His death He cleared up all these negative things, and this is why His death is all-inclusive. His death destroyed Satan, judged the world, condemned sin, crucified the flesh, crucified the old man, terminated the old creation, and abolished all the ordinances that caused divisions in the human race. His death has even destroyed death. Hallelujah for such an all-inclusive death!

THE DEATH OF THE GOD-MAN

Now we need to see who it was that died on the cross. We may realize that Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Savior died on the cross, but we need to go deeper to realize that He died on the cross as the God-man. His constitution is divine and human. He is a living constitution of two essences and of two elements with two natures, so He was the God-man. As such a One, He died on the cross.

In the first century while the apostle John was still on this earth, there was a great heresy invented by Cerinthus, telling people that when Jesus died on the cross, Christ left Him. That would have meant that when Jesus died on the cross, He was purely and merely a man with no divine essence, no divine

element. This heresy is addressed by John in 1 John 2:22, which says, “Who is the liar if not he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.” The divine essence was a part of Christ’s constitution. You can take a person’s belongings, but you cannot take away his human nature since this is an intrinsic part of his being. Jesus is constituted with the divine essence and the human essence, and these essences could never be taken away from Him since they are an intrinsic part of His divine and human being. We should not forget that the One who died on the cross for us was both God and man—the God-man. This God-man died on the cross as seven wonderful items.

The Lamb of God

First, He died on the cross as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). As the Lamb of God, He took away the sin of the world, including all sins (1 Cor. 15:3).

The Bronze Serpent

John 3:14 tells us that Jesus also died on the cross as a serpent: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” The Lamb of God is a figure of speech, and the serpent is also a figure of speech. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He was in the form of the serpent in the eyes of God. This is because we sinners have all become serpents. We all have been poisoned by the old serpent, Satan. When the children of Israel sinned against God, they were bitten by serpents (Num. 21:4-9). God told Moses to lift up a bronze serpent on their behalf for God’s judgment, that by looking upon that bronze serpent all may live. As descendants of Adam, we have been poisoned by the old serpent, and the serpent’s nature is within us.

Matthew 16:23 tells us that the Lord Jesus rebuked Peter, saying to him, “Get behind Me, Satan!” Peter was not a bad man, and he was trying to show love to the Lord Jesus. After the Lord told the disciples that He had to pass through suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection, Peter “began to rebuke Him, saying, God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!” (v. 22). Even when Peter was loving the Lord Jesus, he was a serpent. The Lord rebuked him by calling him Satan. Not only when we do evil things but also when we do good things, we may be like Satan. Satan is the rebellious one

against God, and this rebellious nature of Satan is in our fallen nature. When we do bad things, we are against God. When we do good things, we may also be rebellious against God. It is not a matter of bad or good but a matter of our nature. According to our fallen nature, we all are serpents.

The serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness was a bronze serpent. It had the form of the serpent without the poison of the serpent. In Romans 8:3 Paul tells us that God sent His own Son “in the likeness of the flesh of sin.” The flesh of sin is the serpent. We all have the flesh of sin, and we are still living in the flesh of sin. This flesh of sin in God’s eyes is a serpent because in the nature of the flesh of sin is the evil nature of Satan. The flesh of sin in nature is the same as Satan. Thus, Satan is the serpent, and our flesh of sin is also the serpent.

A Man in the Flesh

The Lord Jesus as God became flesh. He joined Himself to fallen and sinful humanity, yet He was without sin (Heb. 4:15). We realize from the Word that flesh is not something good but something bad. John says that God became flesh (John 1:1, 14), but Romans 8:3 tells us that Jesus was only in the likeness of the flesh of sin. The Son of God did indeed become flesh; however, He was only in the likeness of the flesh and had no participation in the sin of the flesh (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15). This is exactly like the bronze serpent lifted up by Moses for the sinful Israelites, which was in the form, the likeness, of the actual serpent, but without its poison. Jesus died on the cross as the bronze serpent to condemn sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3). Through His death on the cross, the flesh of sin was condemned; the old serpent, Satan, was destroyed; the power of death was judged; and even death itself was destroyed. The world was also destroyed on the cross. His death on the cross as the Lamb of God took away sin with sins. His death on the cross as a serpent was to judge the flesh of sin, to destroy the old serpent, Satan, to condemn the world, and to destroy the power of death. In the eyes of God He was sin. Second Corinthians 5:21 tells us that God made Him sin on our behalf. God condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus.

The Last Adam

The Lord Jesus also died on the cross as the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45b). After Him there was no more Adam. As the last Adam, He terminated Adam. Adam

was terminated in Him because He was the end of Adam. As the last Adam, as a man in the old creation, He died on the cross for us in the old creation, crucifying our old man on the cross (Rom. 6:6). As the very God, He became flesh, and that flesh was the old man, not the new man. Man was created by God and was very good in God's eyes (Gen. 1:27, 31), but due to the fall, man became old. The old man is the flesh. When Christ died on the cross, He crucified the old man.

The Firstborn of All Creation

He also died on the cross as the Firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15). He is the Firstborn of all creatures, so His death can reconcile the entire creation unto God (v. 20).

The Peacemaker

Ephesians 2:14-16 tells us that Christ died on the cross as the Peacemaker to abolish all the separations among the human race. This is why today in the church life we do not have any separation. All the different races are now one in Christ. We do not need the United Nations. The United Nations does not work to break down the separating walls, but the church life works. In the church life there are people from all colors, races, and countries enjoying the divine oneness. Christ died on the cross as the Peacemaker, and now we have the oneness and peace in the church life.

Thus far, we have seen that the Lord Jesus died on the cross as the Lamb, a man in the flesh, the bronze serpent, the last Adam, the Firstborn of all creation, and the Peacemaker. Do not say that I teach these things but that the Bible teaches these things. By using the verses in the Scripture Reading, you can present Christ's death on the cross as these six items.

The Grain of Wheat

The final item of Christ in His death on the cross is in John 12:24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Here the Lord Jesus likened Himself to a grain of wheat. If the grain of wheat does not fall into the earth and die, it remains one grain. But if it dies, it grows up into many grains. All the foregoing six items of Christ's death are involved with clearing up the

negative things in the universe. This last item is altogether on the positive side to release the divine life. His death on the cross as a grain of wheat released the divine life from within Him to impart, to dispense, this life into all His believers. He died as the first six items to clear up the universe and to clear up the way that He might impart, that He might dispense, the divine life into you and me.

This grain of wheat is a grain of the eternal life. If He had died on the cross only as a man and not as God, He could not be such a grain of wheat. He died on the cross as the God-man. This man was the shell of the grain, and God was the inner life within the grain. Thus, the God-man is a grain of wheat having both the shell and the life within. He died as the grain of life to release the divine life from within Him in order to dispense God into all of us as the divine life. His all-inclusive death is altogether for the dispensing of God into His redeemed people.

THE ESSENTIAL AND ECONOMICAL ASPECTS OF CHRIST'S DEATH

We have seen that when Jesus was conceived and born of the Holy Spirit, He was constituted essentially with the divine essence. This essence as a part of His constitution can never be separated from Him. He went to the cross as such a person constituted with both the divine essence and the human essence. When He was twelve years old, He was a person of such a constitution; when He was thirty years old, He had such a constitution; and when He went to the cross to die, He still had such a constitution. It was the God-man who died on the cross. This is essential. But economically, when He was thirty years old, after His baptism, the Father spoke from the heavens, and the Spirit came to descend upon Him (Matt. 3:16-17). That was not essential but economical. When He went to the cross, He went essentially with the divine essence and with the human essence.

He was nailed on the cross for six hours. Mark 15:25 tells us that it was at the third hour, which is 9 A.M., that they crucified Him. He was on the cross from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. (v. 33). These six hours are divided into two periods of time. The first period of time was from 9 A.M. to noon. In those three hours man persecuted Him, mocked Him, and ridiculed Him. That was His martyrdom, not His redemption. Man nailed Him on the cross, and for the first three hours He suffered martyrdom. At noon, the sixth hour, "darkness

fell over the whole land until the ninth hour” (v. 33). At noon the entire universe became dark, which was a sign that God came in to judge Him (Isa. 53:4b, 10). In the final three hours of His crucifixion, this God-man in the eyes of God was the Lamb, the serpent, a man in the flesh, the last Adam, the Firstborn of all creation, and the Peacemaker. It was in these three hours that God condemned sin in the flesh, destroyed the serpent, and judged the power of death. It was during that period of time that God forsook Him economically, so at the ninth hour Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mark 15:34). Essentially, the divine essence could never leave this God-man. That divine essence had been constituted into His being and was part of His constitution. But economically God left Him. After His baptism, while He was standing in the water, the Spirit as a dove descended upon Him not essentially but economically. In the same way God forsook Him economically in the last three hours on the cross while God was judging Him as sin and as the bronze serpent.

The One who was dying on the cross as our Substitute was the God-man. The One who shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins was the God-man. First John 1:7 says, “The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.” To say “the blood of Jesus” is not adequate. First John 1:7 refers to the blood of Jesus His Son, the blood of Jesus, the Son of God. As our Substitute to redeem us, Jesus died on the cross as a man. Only man’s blood can redeem man. Jesus was a man, and His blood was genuine human blood. But if He were only man, the efficacy of His blood would be limited. He could have only died for one person and not for millions upon millions of people. The blood of the man Jesus could redeem millions of people because He was not only man, but He was a God-man. Man is limited, but God is eternal. In time and space there is no limitation with God. As the God-man, He shed the genuine blood of man to redeem man, and yet this blood was God’s own blood (Acts 20:28) to insure that the efficacy of His redemption is unlimited and eternal. The eternal efficacy of His blood is secured by the divine essence.

Hebrews 9:14 tells us that in His death He offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit. As the God-man, He was offering Himself to God, but He did it through the eternal Spirit. This is economical. When He began to minister, He needed the power of the Spirit, so the Spirit descended upon Him economically. Now He was going to die. For such a great commission He needed the power of the eternal Spirit to offer Himself as an offering to God.

BLOOD AND WATER

John 19:34 tells us that two substances came out of the Lord's pierced side: blood and water. Blood is to wash away our sins for redemption, and water is to dispense the divine life into us for life impartation. We need to praise the Lord for the blood and the water. All the negative things have been dealt with, and God has been dispensed into us as the eternal life. The blood was typified by the blood of the passover lamb (Exo. 12:7, 22; Rev. 12:11), and the water by the water that flowed out of the smitten rock (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4). The blood formed a fountain for the washing away of sin (Zech. 13:1), and the water became the fountain of life (Psa. 36:9; Rev. 21:6). Based upon the cleansing blood we can now enjoy the eternal life as the living water. Thank the Lord for His marvelous all-inclusive death.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DIVINE ECONOMY

IN THE SURPASSING RESURRECTION

OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 15:45b; John 12:24; 14:20; Eph. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:3;
Eph. 1:19-23; Gen. 2:21-24; Eph. 5:30-32

Four main items concerning Christ in His divine economy are His incarnation, His human living, His death, and His resurrection. If we understand these four major items of Christ, we will realize that these major points of Christ's process are for the divine economy. We have seen that His incarnation, human living, and all-inclusive death are for God's economy. In this chapter we will see that His resurrection is also for the economy of God.

AN ILLUSTRATION OF CHRIST'S DEATH, RESURRECTION, AND REPRODUCTION

When the Lord Jesus told His disciples that He was going to die, they were troubled and disappointed. They thought that if the Lord would suffer and die, everything would be terminated. But every time the Lord told them about His death, He also told them about His resurrection. At least three times the Lord Jesus told them this one thing (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19). They only grasped the thought of His death but not of His resurrection. Eventually, the Lord told them that He was a grain of wheat (John 12:24).

People generally do not have the concept of resurrection, but in God's creation we can see the principle of resurrection. When a grain of wheat is sown into the earth, it dies in the earth. But that death is not the end. That death leads to something further—resurrection. If you bury a small rock, it will not grow. But if you sow a grain of wheat into the earth, it will die and grow, and that growth is resurrection. When it grows, it produces and brings forth many grains, and those grains are the release, the reproduction, the multiplication, and the increase of that one grain. We may consider the matter of a grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying in a common way, but the principle here is not common. The Lord Jesus used this as an

illustration of His death, resurrection, and reproduction. This reproduction is the dispensing of the divine life. The reproduction of the one grain of wheat is the dispensing of the life of this one grain into many grains.

RESURRECTION BEING LIFE DISPENSING

Not many see that Christ's resurrection is life dispensing. Most Christians only see that the resurrection of Christ is Christ's victory. Death cannot hold Christ. He overcomes death, the tomb, and Hades. But it is hard to find a hymn that tells us that the resurrection of Christ is life dispensing. The resurrection of a grain of wheat is life dispensing. Life was only in Christ as the one grain, but after dying and resurrecting, His life was dispensed into many grains.

Before the Lord died and resurrected, the divine life was only in Himself. Jesus was the only person who had the divine life. The disciples were around Him, but they did not have the eternal life in them. But Jesus had a way to dispense His divine life into Peter, John, James, Andrew, and all the other disciples. The way was for Him to die and to resurrect. By resurrection the divine life in Jesus was dispensed into all His disciples. Before the death of Christ, Jesus was the only grain. All the other disciples were not grains. But He wanted all His disciples to become grains. How could this be? It could never be by teaching. John 1:4 tells us that in Jesus was life. Life was in Him because He was God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God (v. 1). In Him was life. Outwardly, Jesus and His disciples were the same. But the difference was this: in Jesus was life. In Peter there was no life, in James there was no life, in John there was no life, in Andrew there was no life, and in all the other disciples there was no life. Jesus was the only grain who had the eternal life. As the unique grain of wheat, He died and rose up to produce many grains. By His rising up, the life within Him was dispensed into all the disciples to make each one of them a grain. Now we can see what resurrection is. Resurrection is life dispensing. This is a new term that we should not forget—Christ's resurrection is life dispensing. This life is the divine life, God's life.

We have seen that the Lord Jesus as the God-man died as the Lamb of God, a man in the flesh, the last Adam, the bronze serpent, the Firstborn of all creation, and the Peacemaker. The Lord's death on the cross in these aspects was not for life dispensing. Only His death on the cross as the grain of wheat

was for life dispensing. If a grain of wheat does not die, it remains one grain. But if it dies, it will grow up to produce many grains. This is life dispensing. The Lord Jesus died on the cross not only to clear up all the negative things in the universe, but He died on the cross in a positive aspect to release His divine life. Thus, there are the redeeming aspect of the Lord's death and the life-releasing aspect of His death.

When He was dying, two substances came out of His pierced side: blood and water. Blood is the sign of His redemption, and water is the sign of His life releasing. He died to accomplish redemption, and He died to release His divine life. Now we have the redeeming blood and the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) signified by the water. Thank the Lord for the blood and the living water. The Lord's death leads to resurrection. He died to live. Before the Lord Jesus no man died to live. This is because no one had the divine life within him. When men died, that meant termination. But Jesus had the divine life within Him, so His death was His release of that life. He died to live, and the release of His life produced many grains.

OUR BEING IN THE LORD AND IN THE FATHER, AND THE LORD AND THE FATHER BEING IN US

When the Lord Jesus told the disciples that He was going to die, they were disappointed. But He went on to speak to them further and further. Just before His death, He spoke a long message to them comprised of three chapters, John 14—16. In these three chapters the central thought is in verse 20 of chapter 14: "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." *That day* refers to the day of the Lord's resurrection (20:19). On the day of the Lord's resurrection the disciples would know three "ins": I am in the Father, you in Me, and I in you.

The Lord Jesus had already told the disciples that He was in the Father and that the Father was in Him (14:10-11). He furthermore told them that He and the Father were one (10:30). It was through His resurrection that the disciples entered into the same reality of the Father being in them, of them being in the Father, and of them and the Father being one. On that day the disciples would know that the Lord was in His Father and that they were in Him. Since the Lord was in the Father and they were now in Him, they were in the Father also. As long as they were in Him, they were in the Father because He was in the Father. To be in the Lord is to be in the Father. When the Lord gets in us

("I in you"), the Father gets in us. The Lord is in us, so the Father is also in us (14:23). In John 14:20 the Lord said that we will know this "in that day." We are already at "that day," so we all have to declare that we know this wonderful fact. We all have to declare that we are in the Lord and in the Father and that the Lord and the Father are in us. This means the Lord, we, and the Father indwell one another and are mingled together.

We are in the Lord, in the Father, and also in resurrection. When we are in resurrection, we are in the Lord and in the Father, and the Lord and the Father are in us. Resurrection is a person, and this person is Jesus Christ, the Son of God (11:25). The Lord Jesus told Martha that He was the resurrection and the life. He is not only life but also resurrection to us. This should not merely be a doctrine to us, but we must see a vision that in resurrection we are in the Lord and in the Father, and the Lord and the Father are in us.

RESURRECTED WITH CHRIST AND REGENERATED IN HIS RESURRECTION

Ephesians 2:6 says, "Raised us up together and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." We the believers were raised up together with Christ. When Christ resurrected, we all were raised up. Actually, we were resurrected in Christ before we were born, about two thousand years ago. In God's eyes we all were fallen in Adam six thousand years ago, and in God's eyes we all were resurrected in Christ two thousand years ago. This is not according to human mathematics, but this is God's way of calculation. Because this resurrection is life dispensing, 1 Peter 1:3 tells us that we were regenerated "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." According to God's way of calculation, we were regenerated, born again, before we were born. Before we experienced our first birth, we were reborn. This is God's mathematics. When we were raised up together with Christ, we were regenerated with the divine life. When we were resurrected with Christ, the divine life was dispensed into us, so we were regenerated in Christ's resurrection. This shows us again that resurrection is life dispensing.

THE CHURCH BEING THE PRODUCT OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

Ephesians 1:19-23 tells us that when Christ was resurrected, the power to raise Him up was surpassingly great. That power surpasses everything. It surpasses the tomb, Hades, and death. Such a surpassingly great power uplifted Him to the heavens, subjected everything under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things for the purpose of producing the church. Thus, the church is the product of Christ's surpassing resurrection. When we were regenerated two thousand years ago, the church also was produced. If we were to speak about these things to some people, they might feel that we are dreamers. Actually, we are not dreamers, but we are talking about matters in another universe. This universe is not the natural universe but the universe of resurrection. We do not belong to the universe of nature but to the universe of resurrection. The church is the product of Christ's resurrection, the result of the life dispensing. The church is altogether not natural but purely a matter in resurrection. When we live by our natural life in a natural way, we are no longer the church, because the church is absolutely a matter in resurrection.

The church was not created by God but resurrected by God. In Genesis 2 God did not create Eve; He only created Adam. Adam was created, but Eve was resurrected. Adam was created by God, but God did not create a wife for him. God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam (v. 21). In the Bible sleep signifies death (1 Thes. 4:13; John 11:11-14; 1 Cor. 11:30). Then God opened up Adam's side and took one of his ribs and built this rib into a wife for Adam. When Adam awoke, he saw a wife. This wife was not something in creation but in resurrection. Something living came out of Adam, and that was Eve. God used Adam's rib to build a wife. This wife was not created but built in resurrection, and this wife is a figure of the church according to Ephesians 5. The church was not created by God but something resurrected out of Christ.

Just like Adam, Christ was "put to sleep" on the cross, and His side was opened. Out of the Lord's pierced side came blood and water. The blood is for redemption to take care of the fall. The rib out of Adam's side signifies the unbreakable eternal life, and the water out of the Lord's side also signifies the eternal life. The bone of Adam typifies the divine life that is also signified by the water flowing out of Christ's side. None of the Lord's bones were broken on the cross (John 19:36). This signifies that His divine life cannot be broken. His physical life was killed, but nothing could break His divine life, which flowed out to produce the church. With the rib, God built a wife, and with the flowing water, God produced the church. Thus, the church is not something created by God but something produced in the resurrection of Christ. Since

the church is altogether a matter in resurrection, we must abandon all our natural ways of doing things and abandon our natural life.

The church is in resurrection, and the church is one with Christ just as Eve became one with Adam. They two became one flesh, and Christ and the church became one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). Paul refers to the matter of Christ and the church as the great mystery (Eph. 5:32). The church as the mystery of Christ (3:4) is the result of the divine life dispensing. Through the surpassing resurrection of Christ, the life of God in Christ has been dispensed into all His believers, thus producing the church. Praise the Lord for the resurrection of Christ, through which we were regenerated and the church was produced!

CHAPTER NINE

THE DIVINE ECONOMY

IN CHRIST BECOMING THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: John 7:38-39; 14:16-20, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13-15; 20:22;
1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17; Acts 16:6-7; Rom. 8:9-10; Phil. 1:19; 2 Tim. 4:22;
Rev. 1:4; 5:6; 2:7; 22:17a

THE TWO MAJOR STEPS OF CHRIST

The New Testament reveals to us that Christ took two major steps. The first step was His incarnation, and the second step was His resurrection. Among the Christians in the past centuries, much attention has been paid to Christ's incarnation, but the resurrection of Christ has been much neglected. The Lord Jesus, who was God, the Creator of the universe, took a major step to become a man. The New Testament tells us that God as the Word became flesh (John 1:14). This means that God joined Himself to fallen humanity, yet He was without sin. God took a major step to become a man, and this man was wonderful. He was not a common man but a God-man, who lived on the earth for thirty-three and a half years and passed through human living. At the end of His human life He went to the cross and died an all-inclusive death to take away all the negative things in the universe, thus clearing up the way for Him to dispense Himself into God's chosen people. Through His death the divine life within this God-man was released. That released divine life produced many believers, produced the church, which is the Body of Christ. He took the step of incarnation to become a man in the flesh. Through death He took the second step of resurrection to become a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). As the resurrected God-man, He became the Spirit who gives life (2 Cor. 3:6, 17).

We need to pay our full attention to two crucial verses in the New Testament: John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh," and 1 Corinthians 15:45b says, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." Many Bible teachers have told people that the Word became flesh, but not many have taught that the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. In these two verses the same predicate is used—*became*. The Word *became* flesh. The last Adam *became* a

life-giving Spirit. We need to be impressed with the clear and accurate word of the Bible.

The Lord Jesus as God became flesh. He became a man, and this man was the last Adam. This last Adam, who was Jesus in the flesh, became a life-giving Spirit. Before His incarnation the Lord Jesus was purely, merely, singly, wholly, and completely God. He was the complete God, the entire God, the whole God, but He was not a man. He did not have the human nature, the human element, or the human essence before His incarnation. Essentially, He only had the divine element and the divine nature. One day about two thousand years ago He took a wonderful step—God was born out of a virgin in a manger to become a man. That little child in the manger was the mighty God (Isa. 9:6). He was not merely God but a God-man. This is the greatest wonder in the universe!

This God-man's name is Jesus. Whenever you say the name Jesus, you have to recall that Jesus was God becoming a man and that He lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years. He lived in Nazareth, a small town despised by people. He lived in a poor family and in a lowly carpenter's home. It is marvelous that the Creator of the universe, of the heavens and of the earth, lived in a poor carpenter's home, not as a guest but as a son. He lived there as a carpenter (Mark 6:3), so God in the form of a man did carpentry. Outwardly He had the appearance of a man, but inwardly He was God. This is our Lord Jesus. The unlimited God, the infinite God, was limited and restricted in a little home to be a carpenter. What patience! What suffering! What limitation! What restriction!

When this God-man became thirty years old, He began His ministry. The Spirit descended upon Him as a dove to empower Him for His ministry. Then He died on the cross to clear up every negative thing in the universe so that He, as the embodiment of the Triune God, could dispense Himself into us. He entered into resurrection, which was the second step for Him to become something. As the last Adam, He became a life-giving Spirit.

The crucial point that traditional theology has missed is this matter of Christ becoming a life-giving Spirit. We need to see why the Lord Jesus as the very God needed to take these two steps. First, He needed to accomplish redemption, to clear up the universe, to sweep away all the negative things. For this He needed to take the first step, to become a man. If He were not a

man, He could not accomplish redemption. Thus, He became a typical man with human blood and flesh (Heb. 2:14). His death on the cross accomplished an all-inclusive redemption to take away all the negative things and clear up the universe for the divine dispensing. He did a marvelous job to take away all the negative things, to sweep away all the hindrances, to make the entire universe so clean and so clear for God to come in to dispense Himself into His chosen people.

I feel very sorry that many Jews would not believe that God became a man by the name of Jesus. They believe in God and respect and regard the Old Testament, but they would not take in the New Testament thought that their God has become a man by the name of Jesus. When Jesus was with them and indicated that He was God, they said that He was blaspheming (Matt. 9:3; John 10:33). It was preposterous to them that a man from Nazareth could be God. They did not have the understanding that for God to save them, to redeem them, He needed to become a man. They overlooked Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive and will bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel." *Immanuel* means "God with us" (Matt. 1:23). The Son born of a virgin is God with man—Jesus.

On the negative side, Jesus as the God-man cleared up the entire universe to accomplish an all-inclusive redemption. On the positive side, as the last Adam, He became a life-giving Spirit. In His incarnation He had a physical body of flesh and blood with bones and skin. After being resurrected, His body was transfigured into another form. First Corinthians 15 tells us that this is a spiritual body (v. 44). Philippians 3:21 refers to "the body of His glory." This is Christ's resurrected body, saturated by the Spirit and with God's glory (Luke 24:26) and transcendent over corruption and death (Rom. 6:9). In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul tells us that a seed has a form when it is sown into the earth, but when it dies and grows, it is in another form (vv. 35-38). A seed sown into the earth dies and is made alive; this is resurrection. The resurrected body of the seed is in a different shape and on a higher level. The body of Jesus crucified on the cross was a physical body, but His resurrected body is a spiritual body. After His resurrection He still possesses a body, a spiritual body.

In the evening of His resurrection He came back to His disciples, who were frightened by the persecuting Jews (John 20:19). The disciples, who were

under the threatening of death, had the doors shut in the place in which they had gathered. Suddenly, Jesus stood in their midst. The Lord came with a resurrected body (Luke 24:37-40; 1 Cor. 15:44) into the room where the disciples were. Luke 24:37 tells us that “they were terrified and became frightened and thought they beheld a spirit.” But the Lord Jesus said to them, “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you behold Me having. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet” (vv. 39-40). The Lord had bones and flesh, but how could He enter into a closed room where the doors were shut? A limited mentality cannot comprehend it, but it is a fact! If the Lord were merely physical, how could He come in without an opening? If He were not physical, how could He be touched? All we can say is that this is the Lord Jesus in His resurrected, spiritual body, which is a body of glory.

Resurrection is a wonderful phenomenon. It is amazing that a seed can be sown into the earth and grow up into a beautiful flower. After resurrection the Lord Jesus still possessed a body, a spiritual body, yet that spiritual body was still touchable. In the first step of incarnation He became a man to be our Redeemer, our Savior; then He took the second step, the step of resurrection, to become a life-giving Spirit to impart the divine life into you and me. He became a man to die for us, and He became a life-giving Spirit to impart life into us for God’s dispensing.

Some traditional theologians tell us that the three persons in the Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—should not be confused and should be kept clearly separated all the time. But the Bible teaches that Jesus, the Son of God, became the Spirit. When the Lord Jesus was born, He became flesh. When He was resurrected, He became the Spirit. Some people have argued with me by saying that the life-giving Spirit in 1 Corinthians 15:45b is not the Holy Spirit. I pointed them to the modifier *life-giving*. Then I said, “Do you believe that there is another Spirit in the universe besides the Holy Spirit who also gives life?” In the entire universe there is only one Spirit who can give life—the Holy Spirit.

We have to admit that the Lord Jesus as the last Adam becoming the Holy Spirit is scriptural and even logical, yet we may still feel that we cannot fully understand this matter. But we must realize that there are many things we cannot understand. Every person has two hearts—a physical heart and a psychological heart. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that our heart is rotten and

incurable. This is our psychological heart. Our physical heart can be seen by being x-rayed, but who can point out where his psychological heart is? We know we have such a heart because we have emotions, thoughts, a will, and a conscience. We experience the action of the heart every day, but we cannot point out the location of this heart. In like manner, every man has a human spirit and a soul, but can any man point out the location of these parts of his being? All we can do is worship the Lord that we have a spirit, a soul, and a heart. Where they are and how they are related to one another, we do not know. We are limited in our finite understanding, but we can receive the facts according to the holy Word. The holy Word tells us many truths concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We receive these facts and say Amen to them. This life-giving Spirit must be the Holy Spirit. We may not be able to understand this, but we must say Amen to the scriptural fact and revelation that in resurrection the Lord Jesus as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit.

THE LORD BEING WITH OUR SPIRIT

Second Timothy 4:22 says, “The Lord be with your spirit.” Today the Lord Jesus is no longer on the cross, nor is He merely in the heavens, but He is right now in you and me—in our spirit. If He were not the Spirit, how could He be in our spirit? The Lord be with *your* spirit. The Lord today is with our spirit because He is the life-giving Spirit. He is in the heavens, and at the same time, as the omnipresent Spirit, He is in our spirit to give us life and also peace. This is for the dispensing of the Triune God into our being.

HOW THE LORD, AS THE LAST ADAM, BECAME THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

Now we need to see how the Lord, as the last Adam, became the life-giving Spirit. To know that the Lord became a life-giving Spirit is relatively easy because the Bible tells us this directly. But to know how He became a life-giving Spirit is not an easy matter. In the Gospel of John we are told how the Son came with the Father (8:29) and in the Father’s name (5:43). He was one with the Father (17:22). The Father was in Him, and He was in the Father (14:10-11). He did not seek His own will but the Father’s will (6:38). He did not do His own work but the Father’s work (17:4). He did not speak His own word but the Father’s word (14:24). He did not seek His own glory but the Father’s glory (7:18). The Son came in the Father’s name and lived by the

Father, not by Himself (6:57). He acted, moved, and worked altogether by the Father. When the people saw the Son, they saw the Father (14:9). The Son and the Father are one (10:30). This is clearly revealed in the Gospel of John. How the Son became the life-giving Spirit is also revealed in John. First, the Son came with the Father and in the Father's name. Second, the Son became the life-giving Spirit.

In John 7:38 the Lord Jesus said that whoever believes into Him will have rivers of living water flowing out of his innermost being. Then verse 39 says, "But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." Verse 39 does not speak of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, or the Holy Spirit. It simply says, "the Spirit." In God's creation in Genesis 1, the Spirit of God was there already (v. 2). Then after God's creation God came to contact man, so the Spirit of Jehovah is revealed (Judg. 3:10; 6:34). The Spirit of God is for God's creation, and the Spirit of Jehovah is for God's contact with man. These are the two main titles ascribed to the Spirit in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit is not mentioned. In Psalm 51:11 and Isaiah 63:10-11 *the Holy Spirit* in the King James Version should be translated "the Spirit of holiness." *The Holy Spirit* began to be used for the initiation of the gospel of God, to prepare the way for the Savior's coming (Luke 1:15) and to prepare a human body for Him (Matt. 1:18, 20). When Jesus was conceived and born, the Holy Spirit is mentioned.

The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, and the Holy Spirit are just one Spirit. But John 7 says that the Spirit was not yet. The Spirit of God was there from the beginning, the Spirit of Jehovah was there in God's contact with man, and the Holy Spirit was there at the Lord's conception and birth. But why would John 7 say "the Spirit was not yet"? John goes on to say that the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified. For Jesus to be glorified was the way for the last Adam to become a life-giving Spirit. The Lord Jesus as the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit by being glorified.

Andrew Murray talks about John 7:39 in his book *The Spirit of Christ*. The subject of chapter 5 in that book is the Spirit of the glorified Jesus. Andrew Murray points out that the Spirit of the glorified Jesus is different from the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, and even from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God was there in creation, the Spirit of Jehovah was there in God's contact with people, the Holy Spirit was there in Christ's conception and birth, but the

Spirit of the glorified Jesus was not there until Jesus was glorified. From the creation of God to the resurrection of Christ there were mainly four great things in the universe: God's creation, God's contact with man, the birth of Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus. For God's creation there was the Spirit of God, for God's contact with man there was the Spirit of Jehovah, for Christ's birth there was the Holy Spirit, and for Christ's resurrection there was the Spirit of the glorified Jesus.

THE SON REALIZED AS THE SPIRIT ABIDING IN THE BELIEVERS

In John 14:10-11 the Lord revealed that He is one with the Father—the Father is in Him, and He is in the Father. When people saw Him, they saw the Father (v. 9). In John 14:16-20 the Lord went on further to reveal that He and the Spirit also are one. After He revealed that He and the Father are one, He told the disciples in verse 16 that He would ask the Father and that the Father would give the disciples another Comforter, that He might be with them forever. This Comforter is “the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you” (v. 17). We know the Spirit of reality because He abides in us. Day by day He speaks within us, corrects us, and leads us. In verse 18 the Lord went on to say, “I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.” The very “He” who is the Spirit of reality in verse 17 becomes the very “I” who is the Lord Himself in verse 18. This means that after His resurrection the Lord became the Spirit of reality. First Corinthians 15:45b confirms this.

Orphans refers to the children of a father. This shows that Jesus considered Himself as the Father. As the Son, how could He say to the disciples that He would not leave them as orphans? Since He said this, He must be the Father. Is He the Son or the Father? The best way to answer this question is to say that He was the Son in the name of the Father. Because He was the Son in the name of the Father, He was qualified to tell the disciples that He would not leave them as orphans. The Lord's coming to the disciples was fulfilled on the day of His resurrection in John 20:19-22. After His resurrection the Lord came back to His disciples to be with them forever, not leaving them as orphans.

John 14:19 and 20 say, “Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” In verse 19 the Lord’s death and resurrection are implied. When He said, “Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer,” this implied His death. He died and was buried, so the worldly people could not see Him. When He said, “Because I live, you also shall live,” this implied His resurrection. After His resurrection the Lord lived in His disciples, and they lived by Him (Gal. 2:20). In the day of resurrection, the disciples would know that the Lord was in His Father, that they were in Him, and that He was in them.

THE SPIRIT AS THE SON WITH THE FATHER

John 14:26 says, “The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name...” The Father sent the Spirit in the Son’s name. This one thing involved the Trinity. The Son came in the Father’s name, so He was the Son in the Father’s name. Now the Spirit was sent by the Father in the Son’s name, so He was the Spirit in the Son’s name. The Son came in the Father’s name, indicating that in name He was the Father, and in person He was the Son. Now the Spirit was sent in the Son’s name, indicating that in name He was the Son, and in person He was the Spirit. In name the Son was the Father, and in name the Spirit was the Son. This is the Triune God, the three-one God. They are three yet one and one yet three. The Son came as the Father, and the Spirit came as the Son, so the three are one. We may say that the Son is the Father (Isa. 9:6), and the Spirit is the Son (2 Cor. 3:17).

Some traditional theologians maintain that the three persons of the Godhead should not be confused but should be kept distinct and separate all the time. But we have seen from the Holy Bible that the Son is in the name of the Father and that the Spirit is in the name of the Son. This shows that, on the one hand, there is the distinction between the three, but on the other hand, They are one. If They were not one, how could the Son be in the name of the Father? If They were not one, how could the Spirit be in the name of the Son? We must come back to the pure word of the Bible.

John 15:26 says, “When the Comforter comes, whom I will send to you *from with* the Father, the Spirit of reality, who proceeds *from with* the Father, He will testify concerning Me.” *From with* is the translation of the Greek preposition *para*. The Son sends the Spirit with the Father, and the

Spirit proceeds to the disciples with the Father. This means that the Son and the Father both come with the Spirit. When the Spirit comes, He comes with the Father, and the Son follows. When the Spirit comes, all three come. This is the teaching of the Lord Jesus in the Bible.

John 16:7 says, “I tell you the truth, It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” In verses 13 through 15 the Lord Jesus continued, “But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; for this reason I have said that He receives of Mine and will declare it to you.” All that the Father is and has is embodied in the Son (Col. 2:9), and all that the Son is and has is revealed as reality to the believers through the Spirit. These verses show us that what the Father has becomes the Son’s, what the Son has is received by the Spirit, and what the Spirit receives is disclosed to us. Whatever the Spirit reveals is the Son’s, and whatever the Son has is the Father’s. Whatever the Son has of the Father is received by the Spirit and revealed to us. This means that the Spirit reveals to us the Son with the Father. Again we see that the three in the Godhead are three-one, triune.

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE SPIRIT

After the Lord’s talk with the disciples recorded in John 14—16 and His prayer in John 17, He went to Gethsemane and was arrested there in the same night. He was then judged and sentenced to death. He was crucified and buried, and after three days He resurrected. In His glorification, that is, in His resurrection, Jesus as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit. The Spirit of God in creation was the Spirit of Jehovah in His contact with man, and the Spirit of Jehovah in God’s contact with man was the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ conception and birth. Now this Spirit, in Jesus’ resurrection, became the life-giving Spirit.

Now “the Spirit,” the life-giving Spirit, is an all-inclusive drink. The Spirit of God is just like plain water to which many things were added to make an all-inclusive drink. If tea, sugar, honey, lemon, and milk are all added to plain water, it is still water but not merely water. When you drink the water, you get tea, sugar, lemon, honey, and milk. Before the glorification of Jesus, the Spirit

of God was merely the divine Spirit, but in the glorification of Jesus, in His resurrection, many crucial things were added to the Spirit of God. The uplifted and glorified humanity and the human living of Jesus were added to the Spirit of God. His all-inclusive death, the sweetness and effectiveness of His death, His resurrection, and the power of His resurrection were new elements added to the pure Spirit of God.

Before Jesus' resurrection, there was merely the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, the Holy Spirit. No doubt, the divine element was in the Spirit of God, but there was no humanity, no human living, and nothing of His all-inclusive death and powerful resurrection. After Jesus' resurrection, after He was glorified, the Spirit of God became the Spirit of the glorified Jesus. Now in this Spirit there is divinity, God's divine element, and also humanity, the human element. There is human living, the all-inclusive death of Christ, and the powerful resurrection of Christ. All these items are compounded in the Spirit of God. This is "the Spirit," the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving Spirit. Second Corinthians 3:17 says, "The Lord is the Spirit." The Lord is the Son in the name of the Father. He is Jesus with the Father who is now the Spirit. The Son with the Father is now the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving Spirit.

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS, THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, AND THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST

This Spirit in Acts 16:7 is called the Spirit of Jesus. The Spirit of God is God Himself, the Spirit of Jehovah is Jehovah Himself, and the Spirit of Jesus is Jesus Himself. In Romans 8 the Spirit of Christ is Christ Himself (vv. 9-10). Then Philippians 1:19 refers to the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This Spirit is Jesus Christ Himself.

THE SPIRIT

Revelation 2:7 tells us that the Spirit speaks to the churches. The Spirit here is again the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving Spirit. Revelation 22:17a says, "The Spirit and the bride say..." This compound Spirit eventually becomes one with the church, with the bride. I hope that we all would receive a vision of *the* Spirit—He is the compound of the Triune God, the man Jesus, His human living, His death, and His resurrection. All the positive things in the universe are compounded in this one Spirit, which is *the* Spirit. The first four

books of the New Testament are on the Son with the Father by the Spirit, but the next twenty-two books are on *the* Spirit, who is the compound of the Triune God, of the proper man, of the proper human living, of the death of Christ, and of the resurrection of Christ. This Spirit occupies twenty-two of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. In the four Gospels it was the Son with the Father by the Spirit. Now it is the Spirit as the Son with the Father compounded with divinity, humanity, human living, death, and resurrection. The very Spirit who is in you today is such a Spirit. When we have this compound, all-inclusive, life-giving, processed Spirit, we have everything. This is for God's economy to dispense Himself into us.

CHAPTER TEN

THE DIVINE ECONOMY IN THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: John 20:22; Rom. 8:2, 10, 6b, 11; 2 Cor. 3:6b, 17-18;
Rev. 1:4-5; 4:5; 5:6

THE ULTIMATE CONSUMMATION OF THE PROCESSED TRIUNE GOD

God is embodied in the Son, and the Son is realized as the Spirit for God's dispensing so that God can dispense Himself into man. The Spirit is the realization of the Son, and the Son is the embodiment of God. By these two items God dispenses Himself into His chosen people. The way for God to dispense Himself into His chosen people was for Him to first embody Himself in the Son. When the Son came, He came with the Father and by the Spirit, so He was the embodiment of the Triune God while He was on this earth. Second, the Son as the embodiment of the Triune God is realized as the Spirit. The Spirit is the realization of the Son, who is the embodiment of God. By this way God dispenses Himself into us. The Spirit is the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God reaching us.

In the Gospel of John, God is in the beginning. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God (1:1). Then this God became flesh (v. 14), and this man, who was the last Adam, lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years, died on the cross, and was buried. Then He was resurrected. In resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit. On the day of His resurrection He came back to the disciples as the Spirit because He breathed Himself into the disciples and charged them to receive the Holy Spirit (20:22). At the beginning of the Gospel of John is God, and at the end is the Spirit. In between, what is revealed is that the Son came with the Father by the Spirit and died and resurrected to be realized as the Spirit. When the Son is realized as the Spirit, the Spirit reaches the disciples as the Son with the Father. The Spirit as the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God reaches us to be our life, to be our life supply, and to be our everything.

This Spirit is the compound of God and man plus the processes that the Triune God has gone through, including incarnation, human living, death,

and resurrection. All these became elements compounded in this all-inclusive Spirit. When this Spirit entered into us, all these positive items entered into us. When this all-inclusive Spirit dwells in us, all these positive items dwell in us. When we have this Spirit, we have God, and we have the uplifted and glorified humanity. We have the proper and normal human living, the effectiveness of the all-inclusive death of Jesus, and the power of the surpassing resurrection of Christ. Because we have this all-inclusive Spirit, we are short of nothing and have all that we need.

John 14:26 says that the Father sent the Spirit in the Son's name. Then John 15:26 tells us that the Son sent the Spirit with the Father. The Father sent the Spirit, and the Son also sent the Spirit. These two verses show us two Senders and one sent One. The two Senders are the Father and the Son, and the sent One is the Spirit. For the Father to send the Spirit in the Son's name means that the Father sent the Spirit as the Son. The Father sent the Spirit as the Son, and the Son also sent the Spirit with the Father. This means that the Spirit comes as the Son with the Father. When the Spirit comes, the Son comes and the Father comes. All three come. Thus, the Spirit is the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God. The Spirit breathed into the disciples at the end of John is the totality of the Triune God, the aggregate of the processed Triune God. If you have the Spirit, you have the Triune God.

Some teach that the "Holy Ghost" is merely the power, the means, or the instrument for God to do something. To these teachers, when the Holy Ghost comes, the Father stays in the heavens, and the Son is sitting at the right hand of the Father in the heavens. But the Bible's teaching is absolutely different. The Bible teaches that when the Son comes, He comes with the Father and by the Spirit. Then the Son is realized as the Spirit, and the Spirit comes as the Son with the Father. Because the Spirit comes as the Son, whatever the Son has gone through, whatever the Son has accomplished, whatever the Son has obtained, and whatever the Son has attained are all here with the Spirit. If you have the Spirit, you have the Son with all the processes He has gone through and all His accomplishments, obtainments, and attainments. You have the Son's person, the Son's work, the Son's humanity, the Son's human living, the Son's death, and the Son's resurrection. Because the Spirit comes with the Father, what the Father is, has, can do, is doing, and will do are all here with the Spirit.

THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT GIVING US LIFE FOR OUR TRANSFORMATION INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

This Spirit is the all-inclusive, compound, processed, life-giving Spirit. This all-inclusive Spirit is the Spirit of life. He is the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2) who gives life (2 Cor. 3:6), so He is the life-giving Spirit. In this life-giving of the Spirit, God dispenses Himself into all His believers. The life-giving of this all-inclusive Spirit is a crucial and vital point.

Second Corinthians 3:6 tells us that the Spirit gives life, and 2 Corinthians 3:17 tells us that the Lord is the Spirit. John Nelson Darby indicates that in 2 Corinthians 3, verses 7 through 16 are in parentheses. This means that the Spirit who gives life in verse 6 is the Lord in verse 17. The Lord is the life-giving Spirit. Henry Alford, who was an authority on Greek New Testament words, also indicated that the Lord is identical with the Holy Spirit. M. R. Vincent, who is noted for his word studies in the New Testament, says, “The Lord Christ of verse 16 is the Spirit who pervades and animates the new covenant of which we are ministers (v. 6).” Andrew Murray, in his book *The Spirit of Christ*, tells us that the Spirit is the Spirit of the glorified Jesus, the Spirit of the God-man. He tells us that the humanity of Jesus is in the Spirit of the glorified Jesus. That Christ is the Spirit is a great truth in the New Testament.

We have seen that the New Testament reveals to us the Triune God embodied in the Son to be a man, and this man is the last Adam, who went to the cross and died to clear up all the negative things in the universe. In resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit. Thus, the Son is realized as the Spirit, and this Spirit is all-inclusive as the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God compounded with all that God is, has, is doing, can do, and will be doing. This Spirit is also compounded with Christ’s person, work, and the processes He has gone through, including all His accomplishments, attainments, and obtainments. When we have the Spirit, we have everything. When this Spirit dwells in us, God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, and the uplifted, resurrected, and ascended man dwell in us. The incarnation, human living, the effectiveness of the all-inclusive death of Christ, and the power of His resurrection are in us. All the attributes of God and all the riches of Christ are in us. Life, light, love, grace, holiness, righteousness, power,

might, strength, divine energy, and all the virtues of man and the attributes of God are in our spirit.

This all-inclusive Spirit is the Spirit of life, the life-giving Spirit, giving life to us all the time. First, He gives life to our spirit to make our spirit life (Rom. 8:10). Then He imparts life into our mind to make our mind, along with our entire soul, life (v. 6). Finally, He gives life to our mortal body (v. 11). The life-giving Spirit gives life to our spirit, soul, and body to make our entire being life, making us men of life. As the Spirit of life, He makes us men of life. While He is giving life to us, this life transforms us metabolically. The Lord is not interested in outward correction and adjustment but in our transformation, our being changed metabolically. This Spirit of life dwells in us to give us life, and this life changes us metabolically, transforms us organically, into the image of the glorified Christ from one degree of glory to another degree of glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

In some Christian weddings the pastor charges the man to love his wife and charges the woman to submit herself to her new husband. Although the husband and wife agree to do this, shortly after the wedding both of them may realize that they cannot do this. The wife realizes that she cannot submit herself to her husband, and the husband realizes that he cannot love his wife to the uttermost. To teach the husband to love his wife and the wife to submit herself to her husband is the ethical teaching of religion. Humanly speaking, there is nothing wrong with this. But according to God's economy, this is absolutely wrong. Ethical teachings are according to man's culture, not according to God's economy, not according to God's Spirit.

Instead of exhorting the husband to love the wife and the wife to submit herself to her husband, it would be wonderful if the person marrying them would tell them, "Both of you need to realize that the all-inclusive Spirit as the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God is in you. Don't make up your mind to submit yourself to your husband, and don't make up your mind to love your wife. That would never work. Instead, you need to open up yourselves to the Lord every day with an unveiled face. You need to turn your heart to the Lord so that there is nothing between you and the Lord, nothing between you and the Spirit. Every day, every minute, open up yourselves to the Lord who is the Spirit within you. Always say, 'Praise the Lord! Amen! O Lord Jesus! I love You, Lord Jesus.' Open up yourselves to the all-inclusive Spirit in such a way. Behold Him. If you do this, life will be supplied into your

being. Life will be given to your spirit, to your soul, and even to your mortal body to make you persons of life. If you as a husband practice this, spontaneously in every instance you will love your wife. That will not be your love but the Lord Jesus within you. The Lord loves your wife, so you will love her too because you are one with the Lord. As a wife, if you practice this, spontaneously you will submit yourself to your husband. Whatever your husband says would not bother you because you are filled with the Lord Jesus within you. Then you will have a happy marriage life. As you practice this day after day, the life-giving Spirit will supply you with life, and this life will transform you organically and metabolically, making you the same as the Lord in His glorious image. Then both of you will grow in life. You will even mature in life and will be so willing to be built up with others. Then you will not only have a good marriage life and a good home life but also a good church life.”

This is not religion, ethics, or mere doctrine. This is God’s dispensing. This is the all-inclusive Spirit giving life to all those who are open to Him, which is much higher than ethics. In the Spirit are all the divine attributes plus all the uplifted and glorified human virtues. We need to forget about religion, ethics, and ethical teachings. We need to stay away from the letter that kills and pay attention to the Spirit who gives life. We need to treasure God’s economy and enjoy His divine dispensing all the time. All day long we need to praise the Lord and call upon His name. We need to pray-read His Word, fellowship with Him, and be filled with Him and saturated with His life. Then we will be transformed and grow in life to become the same image as He is.

THE SEVENFOLD INTENSIFIED SPIRIT

In the book of Revelation we see the seven Spirits (1:4; 4:5; 5:6). There is only one Spirit (Eph. 4:4), but in Revelation the one Spirit of God has become seven Spirits. Essentially, God the Spirit is one, but in function He is seven. As seven is the number for completion in God’s operation, so the seven Spirits must be for God’s move on the earth. In substance and existence God’s Spirit is one; in the intensified function and work of God’s operation God’s Spirit is sevenfold. It is like the lampstand in Zechariah 4:2. In existence it is one lampstand, but in function it is seven lamps. At the time that the book of Revelation was written, the church had become degraded; the age was dark. Therefore, the sevenfold intensified Spirit of God was needed for God’s move and work on the earth.

In essence the Spirit is one, but in function, especially at the end times in the dark age, God's Spirit is sevenfold. Just like a three-way light bulb gives a threefold shining, the Spirit of God shines in a sevenfold way. Today in the recovery we need the sevenfold Spirit. Today's age is full of darkness. For us to live a victorious life, we need the sevenfold Spirit. We should praise the Lord that the all-inclusive Spirit who dwells in us is now sevenfold. None among us in the Lord's recovery should be weak. All of us in the Lord's recovery should be strong because we have the sevenfold Spirit. The all-inclusive, compound, processed, life-giving Spirit today in the Lord's recovery is seven times intensified. It works sevenfold; it functions seven times. Today's age is dark, but we have the sevenfold shining. Today's society is corrupted, but we have the sevenfold Spirit. The sevenfold Spirit is now strengthening us, saturating us, enlightening us, shining upon us, and shining from within us.

Revelation is the last book of the Bible, the ultimate consummating book. In the Old Testament there are the Spirit of God for God's creation and the Spirit of Jehovah for God's contact with man. But by the time we pass through the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles and come to Revelation, the Spirit is now the sevenfold Spirit who is the consummation of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, the Holy Spirit, and the all-inclusive, compound, processed, life-giving Spirit. The all-inclusive Spirit is now sevenfold within us.

Traditional theology teaches us that the Triune God is of three persons with one substance and that the three persons should not be confused, and the one substance not divided. In John 20:22 the Lord Jesus breathed into His believers and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. This clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit is the breath of the Lord Jesus, and this means that the third of the Trinity is the breath of the second. Now we need to ask whether the Spirit is the third person of the Trinity or the breath of the second. Furthermore, when we come to Revelation, the one Spirit has become seven. Revelation 5:6 tells us that the seven Spirits are the seven eyes of the Lamb, and this means that the Spirit is the eyes of the Lord Jesus. Now the third person of the traditional Trinity is the eyes of the second. Is the Spirit a person or the eyes and breath of the second person? If the Spirit is the breath and the eyes of the second person, where is the third person? By this we can see that the traditional teaching is not that trustworthy because it is not that accurate.

In the Godhead there are the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the Divine Trinity. There is a distinction between the three, but They cannot be separated absolutely. This would be against the revelation of the New Testament. They are three, yet They are one. They are one, yet They are still distinct. This is the Triune, three-one, God. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three, yet They are still one. They are one, yet They are still distinctively three. No one can tell to what extent Their distinction goes. Likewise, no one can tell the point at which Their oneness begins. The Spirit comes as the Son with the Father. Thus, when one comes, all three are here. The three do not only coexist simultaneously, but They also coinhere. For the three in the Godhead to coinhere means that They mutually indwell one another. The Lord Jesus revealed this matter of coinherence when He said that He was in the Father and that the Father was in Him (John 14:10-11). The Father and the Son coinhere, and the Father and the Son at the same time coinhere in the Spirit. This matter is beyond our understanding, but we need to take whatever the Bible says.

In God's economy the very Triune God embodied Himself in the Son, the Son is realized as the Spirit, and the Spirit is the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God compounded with all the divine attributes and the human virtues. This compound Spirit dwells in our spirit, and now He is sevenfold, seven times intensified. We do not need to practice religion, try ethics, or try to keep certain regulations or doctrines. We just need to keep ourselves open to such a wonderful Spirit, letting Him give us life without any obstacles in our being in order to saturate us with the divine life in our spirit, in our soul, and in our body and to transform us metabolically, making us the same as He is in glory.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE DIVINE ECONOMY IN

THE BELIEVERS' WALK ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

AND ENJOYING THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY

OF THE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Gal. 6:18; 2 Tim. 4:22; Eph. 3:16-17a; 2 Tim. 1:7; Rom. 8:4, 13; Gal. 5:16, 24; 3:2, 5a, 14; Phil. 1:19; Rev. 22:17; 21:6

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE BLESSING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the last chapter we saw that the Spirit is the all-inclusive, compound, processed, life-giving, sevenfold intensified Spirit. Some teach that the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, is only a power, a means, or an instrument for God to do something. This is far away from the revelation of the New Testament. This all-inclusive Spirit is the compound of all that the Father is and has and all that the Father can do, is doing, and will do, plus the Son in His person and with His work, His accomplishments, His attainments, His obtainments, and all the processes He has gone through. The Spirit is a compound of all the divine things. It is much, much more than a power, a means, or an instrument. This all-inclusive compound Spirit is the blessing of the New Testament, and this is the blessing of the gospel, which God promised to Abraham (Gal. 3:14). God promised Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through his one seed (Gen. 22:18). That one seed of Abraham is Christ (Gal. 3:16), the Son of God, and the blessing promised to Abraham is this all-inclusive compound Spirit.

The physical aspect of the blessing that God promised to Abraham was the good land (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 17:8; 26:3-4), which is a type of the all-inclusive Christ (Col. 1:12). Since Christ is eventually realized as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), the blessing of the promised Spirit corresponds with the blessing of the promised land. Actually, the Spirit as the realization of Christ in our experience is the good land as the source of God's bountiful supply for us to enjoy. The blessing of the gospel, the blessing of the New Testament, which God promised to Abraham, is this compound Spirit,

the totality of God the Father, of God the Son, together with the processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. We all have received this blessing, and this all-inclusive blessing is in us, in our spirit (Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22). God's economy is His plan to dispense Himself as the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, with all His attributes and virtues—into our spirit. When we open up ourselves to this total and aggregate Spirit, we enjoy the all-inclusive blessing of the New Testament.

To turn an electric fan manually, to “teach” it to move, is similar to the ethical teachings of husbands loving their wives, children honoring their parents, wives submitting themselves to their husbands, loving our neighbors, and being humble. All the fan needs to do is to “enjoy” the electricity, and it will spontaneously turn. In the same way, what we need to do is to enjoy the all-inclusive Spirit as the “divine electricity.” When we enjoy the bountiful supply of the all-inclusive Spirit, this supply strengthens, enables, and sustains us to live Christ. As we enjoy this Spirit, we spontaneously have the living needed in all our ethical relationships. Christ becomes our life within and our living without. This is not religion but God's marvelous, eternal economy.

ENJOYING THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR SPIRIT

The all-inclusive, compound, processed, sevenfold intensified, life-giving Spirit dwells in our spirit, so now we have a strong spirit, a spirit of power (2 Tim. 1:7). Because the all-inclusive Spirit is in our spirit, our spirit is a strong spirit. Second Timothy 4:22 says, “The Lord be with your spirit,” and Galatians 6:18 says, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.” The Lord is with our spirit, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit. What can be greater than the Lord and the grace of the Lord? Both the Lord and His grace are in our spirit, not in our mind.

Some Bible teachers maintain that the soul and the spirit are synonymous. The biblical teaching is that man is of three parts—spirit and soul and body (1 Thes. 5:23). But some teachers say that man is only of two parts—soul and body. In 1954 a certain missionary came to Hong Kong to attend a conference at which I was sharing. He told me that he appreciated the conference, but one thing he could not agree with was that man has three parts. He believed that man's spirit and man's soul refer to the same thing. When I referred him

to the clear word in 1 Thessalonians 5:23—“spirit and soul and body,” he had no argument, but he still continued to believe that the spirit is the same as the soul. If you have a strong mind full of doctrines and do not enjoy the Lord in your spirit, you will end up in division. You will debate and even fight over the doctrines that you have instead of keeping Paul’s charge to keep the oneness of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3), who is in our spirit (Rom. 8:16).

You cannot enjoy the Lord by merely thinking about the Lord. A feast may be set in front of you on a table, but you may come just to exercise your mind to learn about all the different dishes. After two hours of investigation, you remain hungry. If you keep investigating and do not eat, you will die in front of a rich feast. Many Christians “die” in front of the Bible. The Bible is not for your mind alone. The Bible is food for your spirit. Jesus is not merely for us to study or to investigate but for us to eat, to enjoy (John 6:57). None of us understands the food that we eat in a thorough and absolute way. Although we may not understand what is in a banana, we can enjoy bananas every morning. The breakfast that you eat in the morning energizes you during the day. You may have forgotten what you ate in the morning, but you are still enjoying its benefits. The Lord is not for us to study according to the letter. The Lord is for us to enjoy.

The Son came with the Father by the Spirit as the very embodiment of the Triune God. He passed through incarnation, lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years, and went to the cross to clear up all the negative things in the universe and to release the divine life as the flowing water so that we may drink of Him. Then He resurrected, and in resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit. Now the life-giving Spirit has come as the Son with the Father. The Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—is realized as the all-inclusive Spirit, so this all-inclusive Spirit is the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God with all His attributes, all His virtues, and all the processes He has gone through. This Spirit is the totality, the aggregate, the very consummation, of the Triune God with all His accomplishments to be our portion for us to enjoy.

This Spirit is in our spirit full of grace, so the Lord and His grace are in our spirit. Day by day we have to turn to our spirit. Do not turn to your mind, and do not exercise your mind apart from your spirit. The old serpent, Satan, the devil, came to Eve with a question—“Did God really say...?” (Gen. 3:1). Such a question surely stirred up Eve’s mind. The serpent comes to us in the form of

a question mark. The devil, Satan, would always come to stir up our mind, but we have to turn to our spirit all the time. The Lord is not in our mind, but He is in our spirit. This is why we have to call upon Him all day long.

We need to be those calling, “O Lord Jesus!” Jesus is His name, but the Spirit is His person. When I call “Lord Jesus,” the Spirit comes. If your wife bothers you, religion would teach you to be patient. But to keep this religious teaching does not work. What does work is to call upon the name of the Lord—“O Lord Jesus!” When a husband’s wife bothers him, he should not try to be patient. She may never stop bothering him until he loses his temper. The only way to overcome is to call, “O Lord Jesus.” To call upon the name of the Lord is to forget about the ethical teachings, to forget about our mind, emotion, and will, and to turn to the spirit. Whenever you say, “O Lord Jesus,” you touch the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). When you touch the Spirit, you touch the all-inclusive Spirit, you touch the rich grace, and you enjoy the Lord. This is what it means to open up yourself directly to the Lord with an unveiled face. As you behold and reflect Him, you will be transformed metabolically to become more and more like Him in His glorious image.

WALKING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

Paul tells us in Romans 8:4 that we need to walk according to the spirit. Do not walk according to your mind, your emotion, or your will. Simply walk according to the spirit because the Lord and His grace are in your spirit. If you call upon Him and open up yourself to Him to enjoy His riches and to walk according to the spirit, the Lord will gain more ground within you. Then He will make your inner man with all your inward parts His home. He will make His home in your heart to occupy your entire being (Eph. 3:16-17a) and thus become your full enjoyment. In yourself you cannot overcome your lust, your sins. When the indwelling Spirit, the all-inclusive Spirit who is Christ Himself, occupies you and makes His home in your heart, filling you with Himself, you will crucify your flesh (Gal. 5:24) and put to death the practices of your lustful body (Rom. 8:13). By yourself you do not have the energy or the ability to deal with your flesh. But when Christ occupies you, making His home in your whole being, filling you up with Himself, you will be filled with energy and strength to crucify your lustful body, the flesh, to put your body to death, in order to overcome all kinds of lustful things and sins. Actually, this is not you but Christ who lives in you.

As you are living Christ, the all-inclusive Spirit who indwells your spirit will dispense life into you all the time. When the switch to an electric fan is turned on, the electricity is being dispensed into the fan. As long as the fan turns and moves, the electricity is being dispensed into it. God's economy is His plan to dispense Himself into our being. He desires to do this every day and every minute. When we live Christ by walking according to the indwelling all-inclusive Spirit, this Spirit gives life to our being, dispensing the Triune God as the all-inclusive life supply into us for us to enjoy the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This enjoyment is our drinking of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). While the electricity is being dispensed into the electric fan and while the fan is moving and turning, the fan is "drinking" of the electricity. As the fan "drinks" and "enjoys" the electricity, it spontaneously turns. As we enjoy the "divine electricity" of the Spirit, we spontaneously walk according to the spirit. This is not religion but God's economy—the enjoyment of the Triune God embodied in the all-inclusive Spirit. This is absolutely different from today's religious system centered on ethical teachings.

THE LIVING TRIUNE GOD AS THE FOUNTAIN, THE SPRING, AND THE WATER OF LIFE

The living Triune God, passing through all the processes, has become compounded into one all-inclusive Spirit. He is not only all-inclusive, compounded, and processed, but He is also intensified sevenfold. In the four Gospels the Son with the Father by the Spirit is revealed. In the twenty-two books from Acts through Jude we see the Spirit as the Son with the Father—the all-inclusive, compound, processed, life-giving Spirit. In the final book of the Bible, Revelation, the all-inclusive Spirit is intensified sevenfold.

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 water of life is the sevenfold intensified, all-inclusive, compound, processed, life-giving Spirit. Revelation 21:6 indicates that our Triune God will give us to drink of the spring of the water of life for eternity. The Spirit is the water of life, and the spring of the water of life is the Son. The Son with the Father by the Spirit is the spring. The Father is the fountain of life (Psa. 36:9). Therefore, the Father is the fountain, the Son is the spring, and the Spirit is the river of water of life. When you drink of the water, you also drink of the spring and of the fountain. Do not forget that

the Spirit is sent as the Son with the Father, so the water of life flows as the spring with the fountain. When the water comes, the spring and the fountain both come. This is the Triune God for our enjoyment. Praise the Lord for the water of life (the Spirit) as the spring (the Son) with the fountain (the Father).

When we drink the water of life as the spring with the fountain, we are enjoying the Triune God. The fountain, the spring, and the water of life are the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The Triune God consummated in the all-inclusive Spirit is flowing within us as the spring with the fountain. We are drinking the water of life. The Triune God, with the Father as the source of life, the Son as the supply and the course of life, and the Spirit as the flow of life, is our life and our enjoyment. He is the substance of our service, our worship, our preaching of the gospel, our family life, our marriage life, our daily life, and our church life. The Christian life and the church life are a life of drinking of the fountain, the spring, and the water of life—the wonderful, all-inclusive, and glorious Triune God.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE DIVINE ECONOMY IN CHRIST

BAPTIZING ALL THE BELIEVERS

IN THE SPIRIT INTO ONE BODY

Scripture Reading: Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5, 8; 2:1-4; 11:15-16; 1 Cor. 12:13, 7-10, 28-31; 14:4-6, 19-25; 3:16; 6:19, 17; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 3:3, 6, 17-18; Rev. 1:4

In the New Testament two aspects of the Spirit are revealed—the Spirit of life and the Spirit of power. The Spirit of life is within us, whereas the Spirit of power is outside of us. The Spirit of life is essential, and the Spirit of power is economical. Anything that is economical is not as crucial as something that is essential. The Spirit of life comes to us and reaches and enters into us as the divine essence to constitute us into something divine. However, the Spirit of power is not related to the divine essence but to the economy. Many New Testament readers and teachers have not been clear concerning the Spirit of life, the essential Spirit, and the Spirit of power, the economical Spirit.

TWO LINES AND TWO PROMISES

Concerning the Spirit, in the New Testament there is the line of life and the line of power. In the Gospel of John there is the Spirit of life (6:63; 20:22), and in Paul's Epistles there are many references to the Spirit of life. In Romans 8:2 Paul uses the term *the Spirit of life*, and in 2 Corinthians 3:6 he says, "The Spirit gives life." However, in the writings of Luke there is another line. Luke 24:49 says, "Behold, I send forth the promise of My Father upon you; but as for you, stay in the city until you put on power from on high." Here the power refers to the power of the Spirit. This is not something inside but outside of us. Luke even illustrates that the Spirit of power is like an article of clothing. Clothing is put upon us for a certain purpose. A policeman's uniform is his clothing. While he is on duty, he must have his uniform. Without such a uniform, the policeman has no authority. Medical doctors likewise put on their white coats. The Spirit of power is likened to a uniform to cover us that we may function. Acts is the continuation of Luke's writing. In Acts 1:5 the

Lord Jesus said, “You shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit.” This was to receive the power from on high (v. 8).

The line of life is within; the line of power is without. In John 14:16-17 the Lord Jesus told His disciples, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever; even the Spirit of reality.” This is the promise given by the Lord Jesus concerning the coming of the Spirit. This promise is not concerning the Spirit of power but the Spirit of life, and it was fulfilled on the day of resurrection in John 20. On the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the day of resurrection, there was the fulfillment of another promise, the promise in Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:16-21). This was referred to by the Lord Jesus in Luke 24:49. The fulfillment in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost was the fulfillment of God the Father’s promise in the Old Testament. In Joel 2 the promise of God the Father was concerning the Spirit as power to enable people to prophesy, to see visions, and to dream dreams. This has nothing to do with life.

THE CENTRAL LINE OF THE REVELATION CONCERNING THE SPIRIT

The Spirit of life, not the Spirit of power, is the central line of the revelation concerning the Spirit. A person’s life is obviously more central and crucial than his clothing. You may put on and take off a piece of clothing, but you cannot put on your life and then take it off. In the same way, the Spirit of life is essential; the Spirit of power is not essential. Whether or not we have the Spirit of power, we are still living because we have the Spirit of life. The Spirit of life is essential to my constitution and my being, and is essentially vital. However, the Spirit of power is not so essential but is only economical. The Lord’s promise in John 14 concerning the Spirit of life was to make us alive, to regenerate us. By this Spirit we have been regenerated to be the children of God, and by this Spirit of life we are the sons of God. This is our essence; it is essential to our spiritual being and is vital to our spiritual constitution. Without the Spirit of life, we could not be children of God; we could have never been regenerated and could never be spiritually constituted.

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT ESSENTIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY

According to God's economy, there was still the need of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Baptism is not regeneration. We must not confuse baptism with regeneration, as some believers today do. On the day of resurrection the Lord Jesus became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). He came in the evening to the disciples and breathed into them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). At that time the disciples received the Holy Spirit. However, fifty days later at Pentecost, the Spirit still descended upon them.

The Lord Jesus was conceived and born of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18). Since He was born of the Holy Spirit, He surely had the Holy Spirit essentially. However, after His baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon Him economically (3:16). It was the same with the disciples. On the day of resurrection the Holy Spirit entered into them, and they received the Holy Spirit essentially for their spiritual existence and being. Yet after fifty days the Holy Spirit descended upon them economically, just as the Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord Jesus after His baptism.

Some Christians are accustomed to asking others, "Have you received the Holy Spirit?" In reply to this question I would ask two more. First I would ask, "Before the Lord Jesus was baptized, had He received the Holy Spirit?" Then I would ask, "Before the day of Pentecost, had all the disciples received the Holy Spirit?" Some would answer that the disciples before the day of Pentecost did not receive the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit descended upon them on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. However, in John 20 on the day of resurrection the Lord came and breathed into them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Some have said that this was merely a demonstration in which nothing happened and that this demonstration was fulfilled fifty days later on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came. In this respect we should consider the case of Peter. In the four Gospels he made many mistakes, but in Acts 1 Peter became so spiritual. He knew how to interpret the Scriptures, and he took the lead with the one hundred twenty to pray in one accord for ten days (vv. 13-22). Only a few weeks before this time the disciples were fighting with one another (Matt. 20:20-24), but now they could pray together in one accord, even under the threatening of the Jews. They did not care for the threatening of the Jews. They kept the Lord's word to stay in Jerusalem, and they prayed together in one accord, not just for one prayer meeting but for ten days. If they did not have the Spirit within them, how could they do this? It would

have been impossible. This was a strong sign that before the day of Pentecost, in Acts 1, they had the Spirit within them already. This was the essential Spirit, the Spirit of life. In Acts 1, Peter and all the one hundred twenty disciples were really spiritual. They were altogether in the Spirit, and they were full of the Spirit within. Therefore, they could be one, and they could pray together in one accord for ten days. This was marvelous. They did this not by themselves but by the Spirit of life. When did the Spirit of life enter into them? It was on the day of resurrection in John 20:22.

The disciples had the life within, but they still did not have the power. They had drunk the living water, but they did not have the proper uniform. To drink water is essential; to put on a uniform is economical. You may be drinking water in your kitchen, but when you come out to meet me, you cannot come without the proper clothing. To drink water is essential for you to exist, but to put on the proper clothing is economical for you to meet someone. On the day of resurrection the disciples began to drink the “water,” yet they did not have the power from on high to clothe them. They had all received the Holy Spirit, they were all regenerated, and they had all become children of God. Yet they were not made one Body. They were still individual children of God. Now, according to God’s economy, God had to put all His sons together to baptize them in the Spirit of God into one Body. This is the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

To receive the Spirit of life into you is the regeneration of the Spirit of life. That is not the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Regeneration is by the Spirit of life to regenerate us, to make us children and sons of God, but baptism is the putting of all the believers by the Lord as the Head into this one Spirit to make them all one Body. So 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “In one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.” The Jewish believers as well as the Gentile believers in the past, present, and future were all baptized once for all into one Body.

Paul tells us in this verse that this baptism has transpired already. To know when this baptism transpired, you must study the Bible carefully. Only two events are referred to as the baptism in the Holy Spirit—on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and in Cornelius’s house in Acts 10. In Acts 1:5 the Lord

Jesus said, “John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” This transpired on the day of Pentecost. Then afterward, Peter was invited to the house of Cornelius to preach the gospel (10:1-48). While Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit descended upon this Gentile family. In Acts 11:15-17 Peter reported that this was exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost to the Jewish believers. Only these two events, one on the day of Pentecost and the other in the house of Cornelius, were the baptism in the Holy Spirit. These were the two parts of one complete baptism in the Holy Spirit. The first part was to baptize all the Jewish believers. If you are a Jewish believer, you have to realize that you were baptized in the Holy Spirit by the Head, the Lord Jesus, on the day of Pentecost with Peter, James, and John. All Gentile believers, on the other hand, were baptized in the Holy Spirit in the house of Cornelius. By these two events the entire baptism in the Holy Spirit was fully completed (1 Cor. 12:13). This is an accomplished fact. The Lord Jesus died for all sinners once for all almost two thousand years ago. If two hundred new believers will be saved tomorrow, the Lord Jesus will not need to come to die for them again. In the same principle, all the believers, the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers, were once for all baptized in the Holy Spirit to be one Body. This was done by the resurrected Christ, the ascended Head.

If some come to ask you if you have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, you must surely reply that you have. If you are a Jewish brother, you can say, “On the day of Pentecost when Peter was baptized, I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.” If you are a Gentile, you can say, “I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with Cornelius.” When did the Lord Jesus die for you? It was two thousand years ago, even though you had not yet been born. In the same way, 1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us that we all, the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers, were already baptized in the Holy Spirit. We became fallen six thousand years ago. We were redeemed two thousand years ago. Then, shortly afterward, we were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Before we were born, all this happened, and everything was accomplished. Now, we have been born into this blessing.

We do not need Christ to die for us once more. Likewise, we do not need to be baptized by the Head once more. He already died for us once for all, and He baptized us already once for all. Now we just say, “Amen! Lord Jesus, You died for me. Amen! Lord Jesus, You baptized me in the Spirit. Amen!” This is the glad tidings, the gospel. Jesus died for me, and Christ baptized me. I do

not need to do anything but say, Amen! The Bible tells us that Jesus died for us, but the Bible tells us further that Christ baptized us into one Body. This is not the essential but the economical aspect. If Christ had never baptized us, we would still be saved and would still be the sons of God. Peter and the other disciples were baptized on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, but before that time they were still saved.

THE PROBLEM OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

In the early 1900s Pentecostalism came to the United States and spread to the West Coast, where a conference was held on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California. Then two schools of doctrine came into being. One was mild, saying that if you do not speak in tongues, you do not have the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The stronger school, however, said that without this baptism with the speaking in tongues you could not be regenerated. These Pentecostals became divided. A. B. Simpson was among the leaders there. Because he could not agree with these teachings, he departed and formed the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Many among the remainder of the milder ones went on to form the Assemblies of God.

From that time onward in the United States, many Pentecostals believe that if you do not speak in tongues, you have not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. To some this also means that you have not been regenerated. However, I have the full assurance that I was regenerated in 1925, even though I had not spoken in tongues. Likewise, many saints who never spoke in tongues have also been regenerated. D. L. Moody, C. H. Spurgeon, and John Nelson Darby never spoke in tongues. Martin Luther did not speak in tongues either. All these great men, although they did not speak in tongues, were regenerated. Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, also did not speak in tongues, yet you cannot say that he was not regenerated. Many great speakers of the Keswick conventions never spoke in tongues, yet we could not say that they were not regenerated. There is no verse in the Bible saying that if I have not been baptized in the Spirit and have never spoken in tongues, I am not regenerated.

In 1936 we thought there might be something in the Pentecostal movement of the Lord and felt that we should not be narrow but should remain open to them. We went to their meetings and spent some time to watch them. The

more I observed them, the more I doubted whether they spoke in genuine tongues.

The Greek word for *tongue* in Acts 2:4 is *glossa*, whereas the Greek word for *dialect*, *dialektos*, is used in verses 6 and 8. In Acts 2 these two words are used interchangeably. This indicates that the tongue spoken must be a dialect, an understandable language, not merely a voice or sound uttered by the tongue. However, as I observed those who spoke in tongues, they all spoke in sounds that could not be a dialect. A dialect cannot consist of as few sounds as were uttered by these tongue-speakers. When I questioned an American leader of this movement, using an Interlinear Greek Bible, he could not give me an adequate answer. This disappointed me very much. He was a top leader in the Pentecostal movement in China and knew Greek, but he could not explain how this kind of speaking could be a dialect.

In a Pentecostal meeting, one may speak in tongues using only four syllables in his utterance. Another may interpret for him, saying, “My people, time is short. I come quickly. Watch and pray. Be zealous, love one another, and preach the gospel.” On the next day they all will come together, and the same one will speak in tongues again, using the identical utterance from the previous night. However, on this night, another may interpret for him, saying, “My people, the church here needs a big hall. All you who have money should donate it to build the hall. The Lord will bless you.” On the third day the brother may speak in tongues again in the same way, and another will interpret in yet a third different way. A linguist could tell you that this simple utterance of four syllables was the same on each of the three nights. Yet there were three very different interpretations for it. This indicates that this kind of speaking in tongues is not genuine but altogether a human-manufactured utterance.

There is no real dialect consisting of only four or five syllables. Such a speaking as practiced in Pentecostal meetings is only a sound made with the tongue. When the Japanese speak in tongues in this way, they do it with a Japanese accent. When the Chinese speak in tongues in this way, they do so with a Chinese accent. Likewise, the Mexicans speak in tongues with a Mexican accent. I am not against the genuine speaking in tongues as mentioned in the Bible. There is the speaking in tongues in the Bible, but it is not as the tongue-speaking practiced today. The tongues in the Bible are surely a dialect, which is altogether understandable and meaningful. In this

matter we should come back to the pure Word because there is such an influence today that disturbs God's seeking people.

TAKING THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT BY LIVING FAITH

We must take the baptism in the Holy Spirit by living faith. If we are right with the Body of Christ, we are in a position to take the baptism in the Holy Spirit. We should realize that it has already been accomplished and now exists upon the Body of Christ. As members of the Body of Christ maintaining a right relationship with the Body, we are entitled to claim it through the exercise of living faith. We must take it just as we took the value of the Lord's redeeming death. We did not take that according to our feeling or any kind of so-called manifestation. We received the Lord's redemption simply by believing, and the Lord honored it. When we believe in the accomplished fact of the Lord's death for our sins, the Holy Spirit quietly honors our faith; forgiveness of sins and divine life are imparted to us, and we have peace and joy within. We just believe what the Lord has accomplished according to what we are told in His Will (the New Testament). This Will also tells us that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is accomplished upon the Body of Christ and waiting to be taken. We who are rightly related with the Body of Christ should simply take it by living faith. If we mean business with the Lord, He will honor our faith, and we will experience it.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
THE DIVINE ECONOMY
IN THE TRANSFORMATION
AND GROWTH OF THE BELIEVERS
AND THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 3:3, 6, 17-18; 1 Cor. 3:9-12, 16; 6:19, 17;
Eph. 2:20-22; 4:13-16

Prayer: Lord, how we thank You for Your written Word. We thank You, Lord, that in these last days You have opened up Your Word to us. We thank You for Your cleansing blood and for Your anointing Spirit. Lord, we also thank You for the churches. We are so thankful that You speak out of the Tent of Meeting, and we believe that You will speak to us further. Lord, grant us a sober mind, a seeking spirit, and a receiving heart. Open up Your mind to us, show us Your economy, and bring us all into the reality of Your word to impress us with Yourself. We desire to get into You and enjoy You all day long. O Lord, gain the victory. Gain ground in all of us, and defeat Your enemy. Destroy the power of darkness, release Your riches, and release all of us. Unto You be glory in the church. Amen.

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE AND THE SPIRIT OF POWER

I hope we can clearly see the difference between the Spirit of life and the Spirit of power. The New Testament likens the Spirit of life to breath (John 20:22) and to drinking water (1 Cor. 12:13; John 7:38-39). The Spirit of power is likened to wind (Acts 2:2) and to clothing (Luke 24:49). As for the Spirit of life, we need to breathe Him in as the breath and also to drink of Him as the living water; as for the Spirit of power, we need to put Him on as the uniform, typified by the mantle of Elijah (2 Kings 2:9, 13-15). The indwelling of the Spirit of life is essential for our life and living; the outpouring of the Spirit of power is economical for our ministry and work.

We breathe in breath for our life, but the mighty wind as power is for us to carry out our work. Drinking water is also for life, but clothing is for the

outward appearance. Breathing and drinking are the most crucial things to our physical life, and it is exactly the same with our spiritual life. We need the spiritual breath and the spiritual drink that we may have life and live. The rushing wind and the clothing are for us to move, to act, to do something. We need the power and the outward appearance, the uniform.

On the day of resurrection the Spirit of life was breathed into the disciples. They received the breath and began to drink of the living water, but they still needed the power, the uniform. Fifty days later, on the day of Pentecost, they were clothed with power from on high. That power became their outward appearance, their outward uniform. The Head of the church baptized all His believers in one Spirit into one Body (1 Cor. 12:13).

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT

First Corinthians 12:7-10 is concerning the manifestation of the Spirit, which is the issue of the essential and economical aspects of the Spirit. Essentially, we received the Spirit of life as our essence. Economically, the Spirit descended upon us to accomplish the baptism in the Spirit. Our function comes out of the essence plus the economy. Your physical birth is essential, and your education is economical. After receiving an adequate education, we can do many things, and our doing of these things is our function. This function comes out of our essential birth plus our economical education. In all the corporations people are functioning, and their functioning is the manifestation of their ability.

In 1 Corinthians 12 there is the manifestation of the Spirit. First, the Spirit of life regenerated us essentially, and second, the Spirit of power descended upon us economically. Now we are regenerated and empowered believers, so we can function. Our function is the manifestation of the Spirit. Thank the Lord for the regeneration of the Spirit of life, the baptism of the Spirit of power, and the manifestation of the Spirit. The essential Spirit of life is for our regeneration, and the economical Spirit of power is for God's economy. The manifestation of the Spirit requires both aspects of the Spirit—the Spirit of life and the Spirit of power. The manifestation of the Spirit is by the Spirit of both life and power.

First Corinthians 12:7 says, "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is profitable." This is mainly for the profit of others, for the

profit of the church's building up, not mainly for our own profit. Verse 8 tells us that to one through the Spirit a word of wisdom is given, and to another a word of knowledge. The word of wisdom is the topmost aspect of the manifestation of the Spirit. A dead thing could never have wisdom. A computer is marvelous, but it cannot have wisdom. To have wisdom you must be a living person, and you need to be mature. There is the need of the stature of life through the growth in life. Older people generally have more wisdom because wisdom comes from the stature of life, from the maturity of life.

We need to realize that wisdom is much higher than knowledge. Wisdom in 1 Corinthians refers to Christ as the deeper things of God predestined by God for our portion (1:24, 30; 2:6-10). The deeper things of God are Christ. God foreordained that Christ as the deeper things of God would be our portion today. We have already seen that the Son came with the Father and by the Spirit to be with us. This is the word of wisdom. Wisdom is deeper than knowledge. Knowledge is simple; wisdom is profound. In a meeting for ministry some words are words of wisdom, and some words are words of knowledge. The word of wisdom and the word of knowledge are the first two items of the Spirit's manifestation.

I have been asked in the past whether or not we have the manifestation of the Spirit in our meetings. What these persons meant by the manifestation of the Spirit was speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophesying, healing the sick, and performing other miracles. When they asked me whether or not we had the manifestation of the Spirit in our meetings, I pointed out to them from the Word that the topmost items of the manifestation of the Spirit are not speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues but the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. In every meeting the first manifestation of the Spirit we have is the word of wisdom and then the word of knowledge.

Many of those who "speak in tongues" know that the tongue they speak is not real, yet they still speak it. In 1963 the writer of an article in a Pentecostal paper said that he checked with two hundred tongue-speakers, and every one of them doubted that the tongue they spoke was genuine. Then the writer said that there was no need to doubt, and he encouraged them to go on "speaking in tongues." In our summer training in 1963 in the United States, I asked a brother to read this article to the saints. Then I asked, "Do you believe that those of the one hundred twenty who spoke in tongues on the day of Pentecost began to doubt whether what they spoke was a genuine tongue or

not?” Obviously, none of them doubted. Why was it that two hundred people speaking in tongues all doubted? Because the tongues they spoke were not genuine.

In 1963 I was invited to speak to a Pentecostal group in San Diego. When I was in the meeting, they practiced tongue-speaking and interpretation of tongues. I shared that we should only care for the living Christ and that He should be our focus, our aim, our goal, and our everything. After the meeting, we all came back home; they served us a snack, and I went to sleep. The pastor of this group and his wife then took the opportunity to lay hands on one of the brothers accompanying me to get him to speak in tongues. They told him not to speak Chinese or English but to speak anything that he did not know. This brother did not know what to speak, so he could not speak anything. Another brother who was with us told this brother in Chinese, so that the pastor and his wife would not understand, that if he did not speak something, the pastor would never let them go. He advised him in Chinese to speak some nonsense. Then they would be released to go to bed. This brother's wife was an overseas Chinese Indonesian, and from her he had learned a little bit of the Indonesian language. When he spoke some nonsensical Indonesian, the leader of the group and his wife rejoiced that he “spoke in tongues.” The next morning I heard the entire story and told the pastor at the breakfast table that he had been deceived. I told him that the brother he and his wife had helped to “speak in tongues” had actually spoken some Indonesian words he had learned from his wife. Then I said, “Brother, isn't Christ sufficient for us to preach? Why do we need to preach anything like this?”

Another leader in this Pentecostal group told us that he had received the grace to speak Chinese. Then he began to “speak in tongues,” and we brothers who were both Chinese did not understand a word he was saying. I told him that I spoke Mandarin, the national Chinese language, and that the other brother I was with spoke Cantonese. I also told him that both of us had traveled throughout China and had heard many different dialects, and we could not understand a word he was saying. This is an example of today's speaking in tongues.

Of the nine items of the manifestation of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues are listed as the last two, because they are not as profitable as the other items for the building

up of the church (14:2-6, 18-19). These two are the tail, not the head. The head is the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge, the top two items of the manifestation of the Spirit. Of these nine gifts and those listed in 12:28-30, prophecy as prediction, faith, gifts of healing, works of power, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues are miraculous. All the rest—a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, speaking for God and speaking forth God in prophecy by the prophets, discerning of spirits, helps, and administrations—are gifts developed by the growth in life, as those listed in Romans 12:6-8. The miraculous gifts, especially speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues, do not require any growth in life. The Corinthians did much speaking in tongues, yet they still remained in infancy (1 Cor. 3:1-3). However, the gifts developed in life require growth in life, even maturity, for the building up of the church.

First Corinthians 14:4 says, “He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.” Prophecy is mainly to speak for God and to speak forth God. Included in this is the matter of foretelling, predicting. It is when we speak for the Lord and speak forth the Lord that the church is built up. To prophesy, to speak forth the Lord, builds up not only the individual saints but also the church. Paul goes on to say in verse 5 that he would rather that the believers prophesy because “greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, that the church may receive building up.”

Verse 6 says, “Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you, unless I speak to you either in revelation or in knowledge or in prophecy or in teaching?” Revelation, knowledge, prophecy, and teaching are all either words of wisdom or words of knowledge. This indicates again that in the church meeting the speaking of the word of wisdom and the speaking of the word of knowledge are the topmost aspects of the manifestation of the Spirit. If you do not have a certain amount of the growth in life, a certain amount of maturity, it is hard for you to speak this kind of word in the meetings. Even to speak the word of knowledge needs a certain amount of maturity of life. To speak the word of wisdom, you need more maturity and more learning. This means there is the need to develop the ability that you received at your spiritual birth. This ability is developed by the growth in life. The issue of our growth in life and maturity of life is that we are able to speak the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge for the building up of the church.

**THE GROWTH IN LIFE
AND THE TRANSFORMATION IN LIFE
FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH**

We have been essentially regenerated, and we have also been economically baptized. Now we are in the church enjoying the Spirit, drinking of the Spirit, contacting the all-inclusive Spirit, and being transformed. If children do not grow, they can never be metabolically transformed. Month after month and year after year, children are growing to be transformed. Spiritually speaking, we are the same.

First Corinthians 12 and 14 deal with the manifestation of the Spirit, but 1 Corinthians was not written for this purpose. First Corinthians was written to give the Corinthians a way to grow. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul says that he planted and Apollos watered, but God caused the growth (v. 6). This means that Paul's intention in writing 1 Corinthians was not to develop the manifestation of the Spirit. Paul especially wanted to restrict the excessive speaking in tongues. The apostle's illustrations in 14:7-11 indicate that the Corinthian believers abused speaking in tongues by doing it in a nonsensical way, uttering an "uncertain sound" (v. 8) of "no distinction" (v. 7), "without significance" (v. 10). They also overused it by practicing it in any place, in any way, and in any situation. Hence, Paul corrected and restricted them from their abuse and excessive use of such a small gift of the least profit, that they might seek the greater gifts and excel for the building up of the church (v. 12).

The goal of 1 Corinthians was to motivate the Corinthian believers, who were soulish, fleshy, and fleshly, to aspire to the growth in life that they might become spiritual (2:15; 3:1; 14:37) for the building up of the church. Paul's burden was for them to grow. He told them that they were God's cultivated land, God's building (3:9), and as God's cultivated land, they needed to grow. Paul planted, Apollos came to water, and God was causing the growth. The Corinthians needed to grow in the Spirit of life. By this growth they could be transformed into gold, silver, and precious stones (v. 12).

Paul told them that he as a wise master builder had laid the foundation but that all the believers have to build upon this foundation, taking heed how they build, either with wood, grass, and stubble or with gold, silver, and precious stones. Wood, grass, and stubble are natural things, but gold, silver, and

precious stones are transformed material. We the believers are natural persons, but we have been regenerated with the divine life. Now we need to grow in this life that we may be transformed to become gold, silver, and precious stones. Then we will be the temple of God (vv. 16-17). In this temple of God dwells the Spirit, not as the Spirit of power but as the Spirit of life. We must be transformed and built up together to become God's temple with the Spirit of life dwelling in us. The temple of God, which is the church, is a house with materials built together and firmly fitted (Eph. 2:21-22).

In our natural man we are so individualistic that we cannot be one with one another. Even husbands and wives cannot be one. We can only be one by the growth in life and by transformation in life. By growth and by transformation we are built together. In a husband's relationship with his wife, he needs more growth and more transformation. The more he grows, the more he is transformed in the Spirit of life, the more he is one with his wife. The more the wife grows, the more she is transformed and the more she is built together with her husband. Because we are so natural, we have our own desire, our own intention, our own likes and dislikes, and our own way. Therefore, it is really hard for a husband and a wife to be one. The husband may be a quick person and the wife a slow person. How can a quick person be one with a slow one? At night the husband may want to close the window, and the wife may want to open the window. What shall they do? Shall they fight with one another? Both of them need to call upon the name of the Lord. When we call upon the name of the Lord, the Spirit moves in us, causing us to grow in life. By the growth in life we are transformed and become one with one another.

Among the Christians today there is much fighting and division. There is always fighting in a marriage. After a husband and a wife get married, they eventually fight with one another. If we Christians do not come together, there will be no fighting. But once we do come together, eventually we begin to fight. Perhaps in the first three days of our being together, we will be full of praises to the Lord. But by the third day, disagreements may begin to surface. The only way we can avoid this situation is by growing in life, by being transformed. Do not pay much attention to the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit, but pay your full attention to the growth in life for the transformation in life.

We need to go on from 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 to 2 Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians 3:3 Paul indicates that the believers are a letter of Christ, “inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh.” This is the inward inscribing in our being by the Spirit of life, not by the Spirit of power. This inward inscribing is not for the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit but for the growth in life, for the transformation in life, and for the building up of the church. The New Testament does not stress the power of the Spirit; rather, it stresses the life of the Spirit. The New Testament does not stress the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit; rather, it stresses the inscribing of the Spirit, the constitution of the Spirit. The Spirit of life within us essentially is inscribing Himself into us, constituting us with all the riches of Christ to make us a copy, a reproduction, of Christ. This is transformation for the building up of the church.

In the Lord’s recovery we do not stress the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit, but we stress the life of the Spirit, the growth in life, and the transformation in life. We need to grow and be transformed day by day. In order to realize the growth in life and the transformation in life, we must contact the Lord. We must open our entire being to Him by calling upon His name in a real way (2 Tim. 2:22), in a way to touch the Spirit in our spirit. If we would practice this every day and all day long, the Spirit of life, who is the all-inclusive Spirit, will move in us and work in us to touch us and enlighten us. He will expose us to the uttermost in all our failures, wrongdoings, mistakes, natural intentions, and lustful and selfish desires. Everything within us that is not of the divine life, the Spirit of life will expose.

In the shining of the divine light, which is the light of life (John 8:12), we will spontaneously confess. We may pray, “Lord, forgive me. I am still so selfish, so natural. I still live in the old creation and in the flesh. Lord, I repent for not living You. Occasionally I live You but not all the time. Most of the time I still live according to myself. Even though I may not commit any gross sins or do any bad things, I still do not live You. It is still I who live, not Christ. I realize that I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. But this is too much of a doctrine in me. In my daily life it is not Christ but still I.” We need to make such confessions day after day.

All the saints may praise you and say that you are a good brother. Yet you realize in the Lord’s light of life that you are not that wonderful. You are still

full of the self, living in the natural life, and doing things in a natural way always by yourself. You do not trust in the Lord. Every day you need to confess your failure that you do not live Christ, that you do not walk according to the spirit (Rom. 8:4). This is a very good practice. Day after day you will learn to practice to walk according to the spirit, to practice being one spirit with the Lord. He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). We need to confess to the Lord that we are not practically one spirit with Him. We need to ask the Lord to have mercy upon us and grant us the grace that all day long, from morning to evening, we would practice the one spirit with the Lord. As we practice the one spirit with the Lord, we will grow and be transformed for the building up of the Body of Christ. If we would live such a life that practices the one spirit with the Lord and have such a walk that is according to the spirit, we would never have a divisive opinion. We would never fight with any brother but would be one with the church. Wherever we would go and wherever we might be, we would be one with the churches, which means that we are built up.

If all the believers today on this globe would grow, be transformed, and be built up in this way, what a strong testimony of Jesus there would be on this entire earth. If we would live in such a oneness, this would convince the entire world. This is why the Lord prayed, “That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me” (John 17:21). The situation that we see among Christians today, however, is one of endless divisions. We endeavor to preach the gospel to the people of the world, but we may not have much impact. Our preaching may not be powerful because we have lost the testimony. We have missed the oneness. Instead of the expression of the one Body of Christ, there are divisions after divisions. This is why the power is lost and the impact is gone. In the Lord’s recovery the Lord is not concerned with the many works related to the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit. The Lord wants one thing—that we all grow in life and be transformed in life for the building up of the Body of Christ. We should take no other way but this one way to live Christ, to walk according to the spirit, and to practice the one spirit with the Lord. Then we will grow daily, be transformed daily, and be built up into the one Body. We will be one wherever we go.

We enjoy the divine oneness by the dispensing of God and for the dispensing of God. When we live in such a oneness, God has an opportunity to dispense Himself more and more into us and more and more into other

people. Once we live Christ and practice the one spirit with the Lord, we afford the Lord the best opportunity to dispense Himself to all the people around us, and we will also receive more dispensing of the divine life into ourselves. It is by this way that the church will grow and that the Lord's recovery will increase. Then the Lord will gain the victory, and He will be glorified.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
THE DIVINE ECONOMY
IN THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS—
THE GOLDEN LAMPSTANDS

Scripture Reading: Rev. 1:2, 4-5a, 9-13, 17-18, 20; 2:7, 11, 17, 26-29; 3:5-6,
12-13, 21-22; 19:10b

THE SEVENFOLD INTENSIFIED SPIRIT

In our fellowship in this chapter, we have come to the final book of the New Testament—Revelation. In the four Gospels we see the Son with the Father by the Spirit. In the twenty-two books from Acts through Jude we see the Spirit as the Son with the Father. This Spirit is the all-inclusive, compound, processed, life-giving Spirit. In the book of Revelation the all-inclusive, compound, processed, life-giving Spirit is now intensified seven times. He is the sevenfold intensified Spirit. The life-giving Spirit as the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God is seven times intensified. In John 20:22 we see the Spirit as the breath, the essential Spirit. In Acts 2 and 10 we see the economical Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12 we see the manifestation of the Spirit. Finally, in Revelation we see the life-giving Spirit as the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God, seven times intensified. The seven Spirits are the seven lamps of the lampstand (4:5) and the seven eyes of the Lamb (5:6).

Essentially, the Spirit is only one, but economically, He is seven. In God's economy and in His function, He becomes the sevenfold intensified Spirit. In Revelation it is not a matter of the essence but a matter of the function, of the economy. Economically speaking, the Spirit is intensified sevenfold. In substance and existence God's Spirit is one; in the intensified function and work of God's operation, God's Spirit is sevenfold.

Economically speaking, the Spirit of God in God's administration is the eyes of the administering Son, the seven Spirits. This is for function, not for existence. In order for us to do anything, we need our eyes. In the divine administration Christ needs the Spirit to be His eyes. Without the seven

Spirits, Christ does not have the eyes. Christ is the very focal Executor of God's economy, yet He needs the seven Spirits as His eyes to carry out God's economy.

The Nicene Creed, which was formulated in A.D. 325, is not complete because it does not say anything concerning the seven Spirits. This creed talks about the Godhead of the Triune God, the Divine Trinity, in a general way, but it does not cover anything in Revelation. When the Nicene Creed was made in A.D. 325, there was still disagreement as to whether or not Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation should be included in the Bible. Thus, this creed was made apart from the truth contained in the book of Revelation. It was not until A.D. 397 at the council held in Carthage in the northern part of Africa that Revelation, along with the other six books, was recognized as a part of the New Testament. The Nicene Creed is not complete because it does not cover the book of Revelation, which is the ultimate consummation of the divine revelation.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

By the Lord's mercy, we have seen that in the book of Revelation there is the sevenfold Spirit for the testimony of Jesus. *The testimony of Jesus* (1:2, 9; 20:4) is an all-inclusive expression. This all-inclusive term is not so easy to define. The testimony of Jesus is the testimony of the Son coming with the Father by the Spirit to live on this earth for thirty-three and a half years and to die on the cross to clear up the universe, to release the divine life, and to resurrect from the dead to become a life-giving Spirit; the life-giving Spirit comes as the Son with the Father compounded with divinity, humanity, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, including all the divine attributes and all the human virtues. Such a compound testimony is the testimony of Jesus. This testimony has a symbol—the golden lampstand. The golden lampstand is the testimony of Jesus.

THE EMBODIMENT OF THE TRIUNE GOD

As the testimony of Jesus, the golden lampstand is the embodiment of the Triune God. In the golden lampstand there are three main factors. First, the entire lampstand is gold. It is not only golden but gold itself. In typology in the Bible, gold always signifies God the Father's divine nature. Furthermore, the golden lampstand is not a lump of gold but a piece of gold in a definite

form and a purposeful shape. This signifies the embodiment of the Godhead, the embodiment of the Father's nature, and this embodiment is the Son, Christ (Col. 2:9). Christ is the embodiment of God. The third factor is the seven lamps, which are shining for God's expression. These seven lamps are the seven Spirits of God. Thus, with the lampstand are the nature, the embodiment, and the expression. Based upon these items, we can say that the golden lampstand is the embodiment of the Triune God.

Revelation 4:5 tells us that the seven lamps are the seven Spirits. Since the seven lamps are the seven Spirits, the essence and the shape of the lampstand must also be something of the Triune God. Thus, the golden essence signifies God the Father, and the shape, the form, the appearance, of the lampstand signifies God the Son. In the lampstand we see the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, so the golden lampstand is the embodiment of the Triune God. God the Father is embodied in the Son, and the Son is expressed through the Spirit—this is the testimony of Jesus.

According to Revelation 1, the golden lampstands are the churches (vv. 11-12). Every local church is a golden lampstand, and the golden lampstand is the embodiment of the Triune God as the testimony of Jesus. Thus, the local churches are the multiplied embodiment of the Triune God. This definition is too high, too profound. The apostle Paul does not say anything about this high, deep, and profound aspect of the church. In Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, the church is revealed as the Body of Christ (1:22-23), the new man (2:15), the kingdom of God, the household of God (v. 19), the temple, the dwelling place of God (vv. 21-22), the fullness of the unlimited God (3:19), the bride (5:25-27), and the warrior (6:10-20). But Paul never tells us that the churches are the lampstands.

THE VISION OF THE LAMPSTANDS AND THE ACTUALITY, THE PRACTICALITY, OF THE CHURCHES

As the lampstand, the church must be purely and wholly of God's divine nature. It has to be golden in essence. It also must bear the image of Christ, the appearance of Christ. It must be in the form, in the shape, of Christ. Furthermore, the seven lamps, which are the seven Spirits of God, must be its expression. This is the local church. Are the local churches that you see like golden lampstands? When you look at a local church, do you see a lampstand as the embodiment of the Triune God with the Father's divine nature, in the

Son's shape and image, and through the Spirit's expression? The vision of the churches as the lampstands is in Revelation 1, but in actuality, in practicality, the local churches are in Revelation 2 and 3, where we see the church in Ephesus, the church in Smyrna, the church in Pergamos, the church in Thyatira, the church in Sardis, the church in Philadelphia, and the church in Laodicea. The vision is one matter, and the actuality, the practicality, is another matter. If we say that we have seen a golden lampstand in our locality, we have to realize these two aspects of the vision and the actuality, the practicality. What is there as the churches in actuality is not the same as the vision of the churches, but God is working to make what is there in actuality the reality of the vision. Eventually, the churches in actuality will be according to the reality of the vision of the churches as the golden lampstands.

THE SON OF MAN AS THE HIGH PRIEST TAKING CARE OF THE LAMPSTANDS

In Revelation 1, John saw the vision of the seven golden lampstands representing or signifying the seven local churches. John also saw the Son of Man, Jesus, in the midst of the lampstands (v. 13). In John's Gospel we can see that John was very close to the Lord Jesus (13:23; 19:26). After the Lord's ascension John saw Him again. This time the Lord Jesus appeared as a High Priest in the midst of the churches. He is "clothed with a garment reaching to the feet" (Rev. 1:13), which is the priestly robe (Exo. 28:33-35), and He is walking in the midst of the lampstands (Rev. 2:1). He is like the priest in the Old Testament coming to the Holy Place to dress the lamps (Exo. 27:20-21; Lev. 24:1-4). To dress the lamps, the priest first had to snuff the burned-out wick. The wick in the lamps burned with oil to give the light. When the wick burned out, it became black, so the priest had to come to cut off the black part of the wick. This is what it means to snuff the wick, that is, to cleanse the lamp that the lamp may shine better. At the same time, to dress the lamps the priest had to add more oil.

The Lord Jesus appears in Revelation as the High Priest walking among the lampstands to snuff the burned-out wicks and to add more oil. The burned-out wick signifies something that is not according to God's purpose. This may be something worldly, sinful, fleshly, or even satanic. The burned-out wick is something that is absolutely not good. These things have to be snuffed, have to be cut off. The churches also need more oil. Oil typifies

the Spirit (Isa. 61:1), and in Revelation the oil is the sevenfold Spirit. The Lord Jesus desires to add more oil into the lampstands. In Revelation 2 and 3 the Lord was there as the High Priest snuffing the wicks and adding more oil to the lampstands. In nearly every epistle to the seven churches, the Lord Jesus snuffed some bad things, and at the same time the Lord added more oil, which means that He added more Spirit into the church. He is snuffing the wicks of the lampstands and adding more oil to make all the golden lampstands pure and shining.

In every local church, time after time there are some burned-out wicks. The lampstand may not shine so well. Rather, there are black, burned-out wicks. Then there is the need for the Lord to come in to cut off, to snuff, the burned-out, black wicks. Quite often, a local church will also be short of oil, short of the Spirit, so the Lord has to come in to fill the local church with the oil. Then the local church will be cleansed from the burned-out wick and will be filled with more Spirit to shine more brightly as the testimony of Jesus. It is by this way that a local church is built up bit by bit and more and more until it becomes a golden lampstand in reality. According to the vision, a local church is a golden lampstand, but in our locality, the actuality, the practicality, of the church may not look exactly like what we see in the vision. But we have to believe that the day will come when the churches of the Lord will be golden lampstands in reality.

We may realize that the church in our locality is not yet according to the vision in Revelation 1 of a golden lampstand. But when we say “not yet,” this indicates that there is hope that the time will come when all the churches will be golden in reality. In the Lord’s heavenly ministry His intention is to snuff all the burned-out wicks of the local churches, to cut off the unnecessary, negative things. No doubt, there are some negative things in the local churches, but we must be careful not to focus on these things and talk about them with a critical spirit. If we are critical, then we become a part of the burned-out wick. We do believe that in the church meetings and in the ministry meetings the Lord’s snuffing and the Lord’s filling up the lampstands with oil are going on.

Year after year, the local churches are being brought more and more into the reality of the golden lampstands. More of the Father’s nature as the gold is being added to the churches, and the churches are being more and more shaped into the form of the Son, into the image of Christ. Furthermore, as the

oil is being added to the lampstands, the churches are becoming more shining. Year after year, we can see more light in the local churches. This means that the Lord as the Priest is cleansing the lamps by snuffing the burned-out wicks and filling the lampstands with the oil so that they are increasing in the Father's nature, increasing in the Son's image, and increasing in the Spirit's expression. As we dive into the Word with the help of the footnotes of the Recovery Version and the Life-study messages, we partake of more of the Father's golden nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and this gives the Lord a way to shape us more and more into the image of Christ and to add more of the oil of the Spirit into us so that the lampstand will shine more brightly. Every local church needs to be an embodiment of the Triune God shining in its locality.

THE NEED FOR ALL THE CHURCHES TO BE IDENTICAL IN ESSENCE, APPEARANCE, AND EXPRESSION

When I was young, I was taught that the churches should not be the same. These teachers said that the seven churches are different based upon the seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3. But according to the biblical revelation, all seven churches on the positive side should be the same because the churches signified by the seven golden lampstands are exactly the same in their essence, in their appearance, and in their expression. The lampstands are identical as the multiplied embodiment of the Triune God. In the positive sense, all the local churches should be identical. The church in São Paulo should be the same as the church in New York City, and the church in New York City should be identical to the church in Hong Kong, to the church in Tokyo, to the church in Paris, to the church in London, and to the church in Stuttgart.

In the seven epistles to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, the churches are different in the negative sense. All seven epistles are different from one another, but they are different in negative things. The particular characteristic of the church in Ephesus was the loss of the first love (2:4). The church in Pergamos became worldly; worldliness was their particular characteristic (v. 13). The specific, particular characteristics of the apostate church in Thyatira were Jezebel, idol worship, fornication, and adultery (vv. 20-22). The characteristic of the church in Sardis was deadness (3:1), and the characteristic of the church in Laodicea was lukewarmness (v. 16). The churches are different from one another in negative things, but the

lampstands in Revelation 1, among whom Christ as the Head was walking, are altogether identical. In the positive sense as the testimony of Jesus, the lampstands should not be different. Jesus does not have different testimonies. He only has one testimony, that is, the embodiment of the Triune God. Thus, all the local churches, not only in the cities of one nation but also in all the cities of all the nations, should be exactly the same.

In 1968 a group of American saints visited the churches in Taiwan. After visiting the churches, one particular saint told me that he was very disappointed. He said that everywhere we went on the island of Taiwan, the local churches were exactly the same. When he told me this, I felt that this was wonderful. If you see one local church, you have seen all the local churches. Suppose that you visited all the local churches throughout the earth and you realized that they were exactly the same. This would be wonderful!

Because of human pride, we do not like to be the same as others. The British do not like to be the same as the French, and the French do not want to be the same as the Americans. The British brothers may be proud of the fact that they are full of patience and may look down on the American brothers who do not have much patience. A local church in England may be a church full of patience, whereas a local church in America may be a quick church with no patience. Human pride always likes to make the self different from others. You may speak one thing, but I would never speak what you speak because of my pride. I want to speak something different from what you speak, something new and something better. This is the self, and this is fleshly pride. We all have to learn how to follow the other churches, how to be one with the churches, and how to be the same as the churches.

We may not want to be the same as the other churches because of our pride, but according to the divine economy, the more that we are the same, the more glorious we are. It is glorious to imitate others, to follow others, and to be one with others in the spirit. We must learn from one another, be adjusted by one another, and receive grace from one another. The church in São Paulo helps the church in Los Angeles, and the church in Los Angeles receives help from the church in Stuttgart. If we all receive the divine help from one another, we will be shaped into the same kind of image, the same appearance. The image we bear as the lampstand should not be one of national characteristics. The churches in Germany should not bear an image of German characteristics, nor should the churches in the United States bear an image of United States

characteristics. The churches throughout the earth should not have different flavors. All the churches should bear one unique flavor—the flavor of the Triune God. All the local churches should only bear one characteristic—the characteristic of the Son with the Father by the Spirit.

I hope that we all would see this vision. Vision controls. Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint.” The Berkeley Version says that “the people run wild.” We are not wild, because we are under the regulation, under the control, of the heavenly vision. According to the heavenly vision, we see that all the churches are golden lampstands, that they are the same in essence, in appearance, and in expression. All the golden lampstands bear the same appearance and testify the same person—the all-inclusive person of Christ. The Lord is working and moving in His heavenly ministry to bring in such a glorious situation of the churches being the golden lampstands in reality according to their actual situation.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE DIVINE ECONOMY IN THE NEW JERUSALEM

AS THE ULTIMATE CONSUMMATION

OF GOD’S CHOSEN, REDEEMED, REGENERATED,

AND TRANSFORMED PEOPLE

Scripture Reading: Rev. 21:1-3a, 6-7, 9-12, 14, 18-19a, 21-23; 22:1-2, 14, 17

Thus far, we have seen that the Bible unveils to us that God’s economy is His household administration to dispense Himself into His chosen people in order that we may partake of His life and nature and become the members of Christ for the formation of His Body so that God may express Himself through this Body for eternity. In the last book of the Bible, which is the conclusion of the entire New Testament and even of the entire Bible, there are two great signs. At the beginning of Revelation there is the sign of the golden lampstands, and at the end there is the greatest sign, the sign of the New Jerusalem.

A FURTHER WORD ON THE LAMPSTAND

In Exodus the lampstand signifies Christ Himself as God’s embodiment (25:31-37). The lampstand in the temple signifies the enlarged Christ (1 Kings 7:49), and the lampstand in Zechariah 4:2 signifies the children of Israel as God’s expression. Finally, in the last book of the Bible there is the harvest of the truth concerning the lampstand. The lampstands in Revelation 1 signify the churches (vv. 12-13, 20). In Revelation there is not merely one lampstand but seven, and these lampstands are the local churches. In Exodus the lampstand signifies Christ as God’s embodiment, and at the end of the New Testament the lampstands signify the churches as the multiplied embodiment of the Triune God.

In the lampstand there are only two basic elements—the gold and the oil. The gold is the solid form, and the oil is the burning element. When these two are put together, there is a lampstand shining to express God in His Trinity with the Father’s nature and essence, the Son’s image and appearance, and

the Spirit's expression. On the negative side, the priest snuffs all the negative things. On the positive side, the priest also functions to add more oil to the lampstand. Zechariah 4:12 tells us that the oil of the lampstand is golden oil. The two elements of the lampstand are the golden element and the element of the oil, but according to Zechariah, these two elements actually are one. The oil itself is golden oil, which means that the gold flows as oil. When more oil is added into the lampstand, that means that more gold is added. The church as the lampstand is the solid embodiment of the Triune God with the sevenfold Spirit as the oil. Actually, the essence of the oil is the element of the gold.

This can be confirmed by the churches' experience. Whenever Christ as the High Priest comes to snuff all the negative things and add more oil to the church, He is actually adding more and more of the sevenfold Spirit, which is to add more of the divine nature, more of the gold, into the church life. At the beginning, the church in a locality may not have much gold. As time goes on, though, the Lord snuffs the negative things and adds the oil. Eventually, the church will have more gold, more and more of the divine nature. This tells us that the church as the embodiment of the Triune God must be reduced in all the human, natural things but always increased in the divine nature. Our flesh, our self, our natural man, and everything about us related to the old creation, even our good self, must be reduced.

The black, charred part of the wicks of the lampstand signifies our flesh, our natural man, our self, and our old creation. In the church life if you bring in your natural life, your self, your flesh, and your old creation, this becomes the charred part of the wicks of the lampstand. Then Christ as our High Priest must come in to cut off, to snuff, this charred part. A brother may exercise so much of his self, his old creation, and his natural life, that these natural things become black. Then there is the need for our Head, Christ the High Priest, to come in to cut off all these black things. Whenever such a cutting is going on, the adding of the oil accompanies it. This oil is actually the flow of the gold, which is the sevenfold Spirit as the divine element.

In Revelation 2 and 3 with the seven churches, all the black, charred parts of the wicks can be seen. In the church in Ephesus the coldness came in, and the first love was lost (2:4). This was the black part. In the church in Pergamos worldliness came in along with hierarchy (vv. 13-15). Christ as the High Priest in Revelation is snuffing all these black charred parts of the wick. At the same time He is adding the oil into the churches. In principle, today it

is the same. When the church exists in a certain locality, at the beginning it may have been somewhat pure because worldliness and fleshly activities could not be seen there. But after a number of years the worldly things, the fleshly activities, the human opinion, the natural activity, the old creation, and the traditional things may gradually come in. Then there is the need of a snuffing of these black elements. The High Priest comes to snuff all the negative things and to add in more and more of the sevenfold Spirit. The Spirit in essence is the golden element, even God Himself. The Spirit being added into the church indicates that God's divine element is being added into the church. By this way the flesh, the natural life, and the old creation are being reduced in the local churches, and God's divine element is being increased. Through this process the churches become the pure golden lampstands in reality, and this is the testimony of Jesus in today's age on this earth.

THE CHURCH WITHIN THE WORLD SITUATION

The first three chapters of the book of Revelation are on the local churches as the golden lampstands, trimmed and dealt with by Christ the Head as the Priest. Then after chapter 3, chapters 4 and 5 are on Christ, and chapters 6 through 20 are a section on God's governmental, universal administration to purify and clear up the entire universe by judging and eliminating all the negative things. While the world situation is going on, the church is within the world situation. Thus, within this section there are at least six mentionings concerning the church. In 7:9-17 there is an innumerable multitude under the Lamb's overshadowing care. The great multitude consists of the redeemed ones, throughout all generations from the nations, who constitute the church (5:9; Rom. 11:25; Acts 15:14, 19). While the judgment of all the calamities is taking place, Christ will overshadow His redeemed ones. In Revelation 12:1-17 there is the universal woman with the man-child. This signifies God's chosen people with the stronger ones as the overcomers among them. It is the man-child who causes the great dragon to be cast down from the heavens to the earth. In 14:1-5 we see the firstfruits of the believers before the great tribulation, the one hundred and forty-four thousand. This signifies that as God's chosen people are growing on this earth, a small number among them will become the firstfruits, the overcomers. In 15:2-4 there are the martyrs who had been under Antichrist's persecution, standing upon the glassy sea. These are the later overcomers who overcome Antichrist at the end of the great tribulation. In 19:7-9 there is the bride ready for Christ's wedding. This

bride is a corporate bride, referring to the body of overcomers who mature earlier to be ready as Christ's bride for His marriage. Finally, in 20:4 and 6 there are the co-kings of Christ in the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens. These co-kings will be the overcomers reigning with Christ for a thousand years. In these six portions of the Word, the church is referred to. This indicates that the Lord is doing something to cause the believers to become overcomers, to make the saints mature, in order to usher in the New Jerusalem as the ultimate consummation of God's chosen, redeemed, regenerated, and transformed people.

THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH WITH THE NEW JERUSALEM

After the millennium of a thousand years, the old heaven and the old earth will pass away through fire and be renewed into the new heaven and new earth (2 Pet. 3:10-13), into which the New Jerusalem will come for God's eternal expression. Revelation tells us that John saw a new heaven and a new earth and that he saw the holy city, New Jerusalem (21:1-2). The verb *saw* is in the past tense, confirming the fact that the New Jerusalem is not only something to come but something that has come already and is now existing.

The new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem is the issue, the result, of Christ's death. Christ died to clear up the old creation, so eventually the old creation with the old heaven and the old earth will pass away. Christ died on the cross to sweep away the entire old creation, so one day there will be no more old heaven and old earth. Everything of the old creation will be over. His death terminated the old creation, and His death as the grain of wheat released the divine life to germinate the new creation. The new creation is eventually realized in its ultimate consummation in Revelation 21 and 22 where the old heaven and the old earth have passed away, and the new heaven and the new earth have come in. This is a new beginning with a new universe, and in this new universe there is the New Jerusalem.

THE NEW JERUSALEM BEING A GREAT SIGN OF THE TOTALITY OF GOD'S CHOSEN, REDEEMED, REGENERATED, AND TRANSFORMED PEOPLE

The New Jerusalem is not an actual city, just as the lampstands are not actual lampstands but signs of the churches. The New Jerusalem is a great sign of the totality of all God's chosen, redeemed, regenerated, and transformed people. The church today is a house, the house of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). The house of God today is not an actual house but the totality of God's people. The church today as God's temple, God's house, God's building, is not an actual physical building but is a sign signifying that the church's function is to be a house in which the Triune God can dwell. Today the church is a house, and in eternity the church will be enlarged. When the church is enlarged, it becomes a city. The church as a house is not an actual physical house, in the same way that the church enlarged to be the holy city will not be an actual physical city. The New Jerusalem is a city signifying the church's function in eternity to be God's dwelling place.

Many Bible teachers have misunderstood and misinterpreted the New Jerusalem. They say that the New Jerusalem will be a heavenly mansion as a physical place for all God's redeemed ones to dwell in. It is altogether not logical to say that the New Jerusalem is a physical mansion or a physical city for God's redeemed people to lodge in. The New Jerusalem, the holy city, is a golden mountain (Rev. 21:16, 18). This mountain is twelve thousand stadia in length, breadth, and height (v. 16). Twelve thousand stadia is about thirteen hundred and fifty miles, the approximate distance from New York to Dallas. Such a high mountain has only one street, which goes down spirally from the top of the mountain to reach all the twelve gates on the four sides of the city.

If this is a real city to lodge in, we must ask how all of God's redeemed through all the centuries will be able to lodge there. How could so many people live in a city with only one main spiral street? How could these people travel in a city with only one main street? For a physical city with only one main street to contain billions of people is impossible. The holy city is not a physical heavenly mansion but a sign signifying the totality of all God's chosen people. In the eyes of God, all His redeemed people will be like a great city, just as today in God's eyes all the redeemed people are His house. In this age God's people are His house, but in eternity God's people will be His city. The New Jerusalem will be the ultimate consummation of God's people.

THE WIFE OF THE LAMB

Revelation 21 tells us that this city is a wife (v. 9). The New Jerusalem is the wife of the Lamb, the bride of the Lamb (v. 2). This indicates that the city is organic. It is not something physical but is a life matter.

GOD'S TABERNACLE AND GOD'S TEMPLE

Revelation 21 also tells us that this city as the wife of the Lamb is God's tabernacle, God's dwelling place (v. 3). Eventually, the New Jerusalem will be a dwelling for both God and His serving ones. In the Old Testament the tabernacle was God's dwelling, and at the same time it was the priests' dwelling in which they served. Both God and His serving priests dwell in the same tabernacle. To God the New Jerusalem is His dwelling, and to us God is our dwelling because Revelation tells us that in the New Jerusalem there is no temple, "for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (v. 22). God and the Lamb become the dwelling place of His serving ones. This word matches Psalm 90:1, which says, "O Lord, You have been our dwelling place / In all generations." Therefore, the tabernacle is God's dwelling place with His serving ones, and this very God who dwells in the tabernacle is the temple, which is the dwelling place of His serving ones.

Again, we must realize what a wrong concept it is to say that the New Jerusalem is a great physical mansion for God's children to lodge in. Revelation says that God Himself, God and the Lamb, will be the temple for us who serve Him to dwell in. Our dwelling place in eternity is God Himself. We will not dwell in a big mansion. We will dwell in God. He is our temple, and we are His tabernacle. He dwells in us, and we dwell in Him, and this mutual dwelling is the New Jerusalem, which to God is the tabernacle and to us is the temple. We enjoy a foretaste of this today when we abide in the Lord and the Lord abides in us (John 15:5). This mutual abode will be enlarged in eternity to be the New Jerusalem, where God will be our dwelling place, and we will be His dwelling place.

THE NEW JERUSALEM BEING IN RESURRECTION

We need to abandon the thought of a physical dwelling place. When we come to divine, heavenly, and spiritual things, we must put aside our natural thoughts. When I was young, I heard some Bible teachers discussing what we would eat and where the restroom would be in the "heavenly mansion." How poor it is to bring in our natural thought! The Lord Jesus told the Sadducees

that they did not know the Bible, that in the resurrection men “neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Matt. 22:30). Today in this age there is marriage, but in the resurrection there will be no marriage, because all will be like the angels. In the New Jerusalem everything will be in resurrection. Revelation 21:17b says that the wall’s measurement is “the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.” This is a sign that by then man will be like the angels. Man’s being like an angel indicates the principle of resurrection. The entire city, therefore, will be in resurrection.

ENJOYING THE TRIUNE GOD AND BEING TRANSFORMED FOR HIS FULL EXPRESSION

As the constituents of the New Jerusalem, we will enjoy the Triune God as everything to us. We will enjoy Him as our dwelling place (v. 22), as the tree of life to feed us (22:2), as the river of water of life to satisfy us (v. 1), and as the light of life to illumine us (21:23). Everything will be God Himself. Eventually, we will be completely transformed into gold, pearls, and precious stones. The city itself with its street is pure gold (vv. 18, 21). The twelve gates of the city are twelve pearls (v. 21), the foundation of the city is adorned with precious stones (v. 19), and the light of the New Jerusalem is like a jasper stone (v. 11), bearing the appearance of God to express God by her shining.

God’s appearance is like jasper (4:3), and the entire city has the appearance of jasper. This means that the entire New Jerusalem looks like God, which is the fulfillment of Genesis 1:26. God made man in His image to express Himself. When the New Jerusalem comes, all of God’s people will bear God’s expression, God’s image, God’s appearance. All of God’s people will be fully transformed for the full expression of the Triune God. Today every local church is a miniature of the New Jerusalem. Today God is our dwelling place, our food, our drink, our life, our light, our nature, and our element to become our expression. We are being transformed into precious material for God’s universal and consummate building in the universe, the New Jerusalem, where all of God’s redeemed people will bear the likeness, the appearance, of God (1 John 3:2).