A PATTERN OF THE HEALTHY WORD

LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

A PATTEN OF THE HEALTHY WORDS

AN EXPLANATION

Timothy received "a pattern of the healthy words" from Paul (2 Tim. 1:13) and committed it to faithful men who were competent to teach others (2:2). The saints in the churches also need to be perfected in the pattern of the healthy words regarding God's economy that they may receive the commission of the Lord's move and function organically in the Body of Christ. This curriculum, which has been compiled and edited with this burden, comprises ninety-six lessons in four series with twenty-four lessons in each series:

The first series—The Preparation of the Vessel

The second series—The Way to Study the Truth

The third series—The Content of God's New Testament Economy

The fourth series—The Practice of the New Way

The content of the curriculum is taken from the publications of Brother Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. Each lesson includes hymns, Scripture readings, outlines (with verses), references, ministry excerpts, and questions and answers.

Please read "Some Words for the Serving Ones," which precedes Lesson One of the first series. This contains a word concerning the need for training and some other points for the serving ones. Moreover, Lessons Seven through Eleven in the fourth series concerning the basic knowledge and practice of the new believers have been published as The Holy Word for Morning Revival—New Believers Series (II), consisting of five weeks of daily nourishment, for nourishing the new believers.

SERIES I

THE PREPARATION OF THE VESSEL

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SOME WORDS FOR THE SERVING ONES

THE SAINTS IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY NEEDING PROPER EDUCATION

To carry out this New Testament ministry we must first get into this ministry. After getting into it, we must have some proper way or the best way to help the saints in the recovery to get solidly educated in this New Testament ministry. ...It is crucial for us to find out what the best way is to help the saints in each local church to get into the same things which we ourselves have gotten into. ...Based upon our experience over the years, a good number of saints have been meeting with us year after year, yet if you check with them today, you would discover that not much intrinsic element of the divine revelation has been really wrought and constituted into their being, ...even more in the matter of truth. I am really concerned that not many among us can present particular truths in an adequate way.

We want to have a meeting ...so living and so full of nourishment. But still, we must carry out the saints' education in the basic truths. Then all the saints who have been meeting in the Lord's recovery with us for many years will get the adequate, solid, and basic education of the New Testament economy. Eventually, they will have the New Testament ministry to minister these truths to the unbelievers, to the believers who do not meet with us, and also to minister life to all the people. ...We need a new start. After three years of meeting with us, the saints should have received some solid education of the New Testament ministry. (Elders' Training, Book 1, pp.87-88, 98-99)

THE NEW BELIEVERS NEEDING A PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

[In the Lord's recovery], some of you have heard my speaking until today (1986) for thirty-seven years. At that time you were still young brothers and sisters, and the majority of you was single, but now your children have already graduated from college, and many of them have become elders.

Before they were born, you were here listening to my speaking, but until today, you have not graduated even from elementary school. What is the reason? Human education invents a set of system which consists of six years of elementary school, six years of high school, and four years of college, with well-planned curriculum for each year. As long as a person study progressively according to this set of curriculum, sixteen years later, he will surely graduate from college and have absorbed the human common knowledge into him in a systematic way. However, what I have spoken to you in these thirty-seven years is inspirational but not systematic. Hence, until this day, you may not be able to speak even on the matter of justification by faith. This is like you have heard of mathematics for thirty-six years and know that three plus two equals five, but when we ask you to teach others, you are not able to do so. (Rising Up To Preach The Gospel, p. 130 in Chinese)

THE NEW BELIEVERS NEEDING TO BE GIVEN FOOD AT THE PROPER TIME ACCORDING TO THE TIME AND THE NEED

The elders and co-workers should...carefully choose various kinds of messages and materials for purpose of pursuing. You have to spend enough time to pray thoroughly, observe closely the condition of the brothers and sisters, understand all kinds of needs, know their situation in the meetings, and find the proper materials from the ministry's publication. Just like a mother, when she prepares food for her family, she takes care of everyone's situation. Sometimes when her family member is sick, she has to prepare something special for him or her; sometimes with the change in weather, she has to buy something appropriate for the weather. You have to study and have some common knowledge of all these things.

Matthew 24:45 says that the faithful and prudent slave is able to give food to the children of God at the proper time. Here "to give them food at the proper time" has a deep significance. We not only give people different food at different times, but we also prepare different food to people according to their need. This matter requires our time to study. Sometimes when you meet a new believer, regardless of what his condition, you speak to him about the

seventy “sevens.” It is true that what you speak is the word of God, but this portion of food does not nourish him but kill him. The word of God is life, but if you use it improperly, it becomes something that kills people and ruins their appetite. In this way, they may not have the desire to come to the meetings because what he hears is not profitable to him. Perhaps I am too much, but I just what to show you that based on the principle of giving food at the proper time, we have to prepare messages for the pursuing in different kinds of meetings. This matter is critical in the progress of the meetings. Whether a meeting is profitable or attractive to man all depends on this matter. (The Vision And Specific Steps for The Practice Of The New Way, p. 256 in Chinese)

TEACHING THE NEW BELIEVERS REQUIRING WE OURSELVES TO KNOW THE TRUTH THOROUGHLY

The first and foremost thing is that we ourselves have to know the truth. This is like teaching mathematics. If our mathematics is not good, it will be very difficult to teach others. The truth that we mention is mainly the truth concerning the church. We have to teach people that they may have a thorough understanding of the church.

TEACHING THE NEW BELIEVERS REQUIRING CONCISENESS AND CLARITY

When we go to teach people, we have to try to make everything simple. This is likened to a couch teaching people basketball. He first teaches them basic movements, hoping that they will practice all these basic movements until they are dexterous. Then when they are playing in a game, they do not necessarily play according to the couch’s basic movements; rather, they use the basic movement flexibly. The goal is just to throw the ball into the hoop. I hope that we all understand these two aspects. On the one hand, we have to be equipped with the truth; while on the other hand, we have to be concise and simple to present the truth to the new believers in a clear way. (Bearing Fruit that Remains, p. 114 in Chinese)

TEACHING THE NEW BELIEVERS

REQUIRING THE TRANSMISSION OF SPIRIT AND LIFE

One thing we have to pay a special attention to is that the messages which we choose must contain a few crucial verses at the beginning. Every time we gather together, we have to pray read these verses so as to allow the Lord's word to be sowed into us. The Lord's word is living, operative, and full of power. I hope that when people come to our meeting, they will receive nourishing and truth and be able to testify that we are for the preaching of the gospel and the expounding of the truth.

Both spirit and life are in the truth. The reality of the truth is spirit and life. Thus, the genuine teaching of the truth is:

First, to transmit and dispense into people the spirit and life which are in the truth. For this reason, we must be one who lives in spirit and life.

Second, the curriculum itself is a series of messages, and there is no need for the teachers to explain anything or add notes. The material is already very rich and clear. What the teachers have to do is to take the lead to learn together. If the teachers take the lead to learn the line, the main focus, the general outline, the big points, and the small items of the curriculum, read them out one by one, and read them into people, then it will be their supply.

Third, the teachers' spirit has to be released, and they should not be shy or coward. Only when your spirit come out can it stir up the saints' spirit. Then everyone will be sobered to practice seriously and receive the transmission.

Fourth, prior to your teaching, the teachers first have to be prepared, not on the material, but to have a thorough study of the outline and learn how to work the outline into people and leave them a deep impression. (The Vision And Specific Steps for The Practice Of The New Way, p. 331 in Chinese)

NOT TEACHING THEOLOGY BUT MINISTERING THE TRIUNE GOD AS SPIRITUAL FOOD

The nature of the Summer School of Truth actually is not a matter of teaching but of ministering or serving. ...We may use a restaurant as an illustration. A restaurant is not for teaching about food but for serving food. Those who serve in a restaurant do not merely give people a menu and then

teach them about food. Instead, the serving ones supply others with different courses of food for eating. The principle should be the same with what we call the Summer School of Truth. ...Our intention is not to give people a "menu" and then teach them about God. Our intention is to serve, to minister, God as different "dishes" for eating.

The situation of today's seminaries is very different from this. Seminary instructors ...mainly teach theology, the mere knowledge about God. They do not minister God Himself to the students. We do not want ...to resemble a theological school. Our school should actually be a "restaurant" serving the Triune God to the ...saints.

BRING PEOPLE TO THE TRIUNE GOD

Our goal is to bring ...people not to the lesson books but to bring them to the Triune God through the lesson books. Our lesson books should be a channel through which ...people are brought to the Triune God. ...This means that your aim is not to teach the lesson book but to bring ...people to God through a channel of the lesson book.

Through your teaching, your serving, ...everyone in your class should be brought to God. You need to labor to bring every ...person in your class to the Triune God, so that by the time you have finished all the lessons, the students in your class will have gained the Triune God and will have been filled with God, not with mere knowledge about God in letter. (Teacher's Training, Chapter 1)

NOT TEACHING DIFFERENTLY FROM GOD'S ECONOMY

In 1 Tim 1:3-4 Paul spoke to Timothy, one of his closest co-workers, saying, "Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things. We must take heed to Paul's charge not to teach differently from God's economy. We believe that since the time of the apostles God's economy has not been stressed as much as it has been stressed in the Lord's recovery, especially in the past twenty years. God has a great plan—to dispense Himself

in His Trinity into His chosen people. Our teaching must be governed by a view of God's economy.

...You should not have any burden, any view, or any vision other than God's economy. You need to be not only burdened with God's economy but also soaked and saturated with God's economy. In your teaching you should know only one thing—God's economy. You should be able to declare, "God's economy is my burden, my view, and my vision. My entire being has been soaked in God's economy, and I know nothing else." To be sure, you will teach many different lessons, but every lesson will be structured with God's economy.

FANNING INTO FLAME THE GIFT OF GOD

In 2 Tim. 2:2 Paul charged Timothy to commit to faithful men the things which he had heard from Paul. These faithful men should be those who are competent to teach others. In order to fulfill this commission, Timothy himself had to be on fire. This is the reason Paul reminded him to "fan into flame the gift of God" which was in him (1:6).

God has given us two precious things—His divine life and His divine Spirit. Now we need to fan the gift of God into flame. ...We need to open our entire being. Open your mind, emotion, and will. Open your entire soul, open your heart, and open your spirit. Every morning we need to go to the Lord and open ourselves to Him. ...Before you go to teach, you must first fan the gift into flame. The more you open, the more the fire will burn. ...If your being is closed, you need to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. As you call on the lord, open not only your mouth but also your spirit and your heart ...that will fan into flame the eternal life and the eternal Spirit within you. Fan into flame the gift which you have received from God. Let the gift become a flame. Then go to teach ...people not with an "ice-cold" mind but with a flame.

BEING A PERSON OF PRAYER, BRINGING IN A SPIRIT OF PRAYER

If you would go to your class ...with a flame, you must be a person of prayer. If you are such a person, you will bring a spirit of prayer to your class. ...This means that you need to create an atmosphere of prayer.

Do you know what a living meeting is? A living meeting is a meeting that has an atmosphere of prayer. All those who speak for the Lord know that it is easy to speak in a meeting where there is an atmosphere of prayer. Otherwise, it will be very difficult to speak, for you may feel as if you are speaking in a cemetery. ...There is no need to fan the gift of God into flame in order to teach a class in a secular school. But to teach in our ...school, you must be a person of prayer, a person with a flame who brings in an atmosphere of prayer. (Chapter 3)

TEACHING IN AN EXPERIENTIAL WAY RATHER THAN IN A DOCTRINAL WAY

In order to teach in an experiential way, you must convert every point in the lesson from doctrine into experience. Suppose a particular lesson has five points. In your preparation, you should try to convert every point of doctrine into experience. This requires practice. After making such a conversion during your time of preparation, you should then speak to ...people about each point in the way of experience. The more you speak in this way, the more they will be unveiled. They will see a vision that will expose them, and spontaneously they will be ushered into the experience of the very matter you have been presenting.

However, if you teach in the way of merely imparting doctrines from the printed materials, you will do nothing more than impart some knowledge to the minds of your students. As a result, they will gain nothing in an experiential way. Moreover, the knowledge they gain may damage them. ...In the ministry in the Lord's recovery, we present our teachings not in the way of doctrine but in the way of life. ...However, although we do not stress doctrine, our way of teaching conveys a great deal of doctrine. Every message of our life-study of the Scriptures conveys a certain amount of doctrine, yet the impression made upon the reader is not the impression of doctrine but the impression of the experience and enjoyment of God, Christ, and the Spirit.

Outwardly one does learn some doctrine, but it is experiential doctrine, doctrine that is learned through experience.

If you try to convert every point in the lessons into experience, you yourself will be helped. You may realize that you do not know how to convert doctrine into experience, because you are lacking in experience. This will expose you, and then you will know where you are. ...Then as you are preparing a lesson, you may begin to check yourself regarding your experience. Point by point you may ask yourself, “Do I have the experience of this matter? Is my experience of this point adequate? Am I able to teach others about this point in an experiential way?” ...This may cause you to pray, “Lord, have mercy upon me. I need some experience of this matter.” This is the way to prepare yourself to teach every lesson. (Chapter 4)

LESSON ONE

THE TRAINING IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,

Eph. 4:12 for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

Col. 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ.

Hymn: 947

OUTLINE

I. The burden of training:

A. Perfecting the saints—Eph. 4:12a.

Eph. 4:12 for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

B. For the work of the ministry—Eph. 4:12b.

C. For the building up the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12c.

II. The purpose of training:

A. That the trainees might be built up in Christ and grow to maturity in the life of Christ—Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:28.

Eph. 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ.

Col. 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ.

B. That the trainees might be equipped in the divine truth through the realization of the Holy Word according to the revelation of the Holy Spirit—2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:18.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

2 Tim. 3:17 That the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

1 Tim. 2:4 Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth.

2 Pet. 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and unto the day of eternity. Amen.

C. That the trainees might be built up and nurtured in such spiritual functions as preaching the gospel, nourishing the new believers, perfecting the saints, and building up the local church by prophesying God's word to consummate the Body of Christ—Matt. 28:19; 1 Thes. 2:7; Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 14:1.

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

1 Thes. 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.

Eph. 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

1 Cor. 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

III. The goal of training:

A. Arriving at the high peak of the divine revelation—God became man so that man might become God in life and nature (but not in the Godhead).

B. Becoming today's Zion (the overcomers) in today's Jerusalem (the church)—Rev. 14:1.

Rev. 14:1 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

C. Arriving at the reality of the Body of Christ through a living that conforms to the death of Christ in the power of His resurrection—Phil. 3:10.

Phil. 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

IV. The pattern of training:

A. Paul proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught the things

concerning the Lord Jesus Christ in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus and in his own rented house in Rome. This was a work outside of the church yet was related to and for the church—Acts 19:9-10; 28:30-31.

Acts 19:9 But when some were hardened and would not be persuaded, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

Acts 19:10 And this took place for two years, so that all those dwelling in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 28:30 And he remained two whole years in his own rented dwelling and welcomed all those who came to him,

Acts 28:31 Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered.

B. The pattern set by brother Nee and brother Lee—Watchman Nee, A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, Chapter 24, and Elders' Training, Book 9, Chapter 5.

V. The contents of the training:

A. In truth.

B. In life.

C. In the gospel.

D. In service.

E. In character.

REFERENCE

Watchman Nee's Testimony; Msg. 2; Watchman Nee—A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, Ch. 24; Elders' Training, Book 8, Ch. 11; Elders' Training, Book 9, Chs. 5, 7-8,10; Life-Study of Ephesians, Msg. 41; Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 3; Living a Life According to the High Peak of God's Revelation, Ch. 5; The Practical Points Concerning Blending, Ch. 1; The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, Msg. 1.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE BURDEN OF THE TRAINING

If the return of the Lord be delayed, it will be necessary to raise up a number of youths to continue the testimony and work for the next generation. Many workers have already prayed for this matter with the hope of providing a suitable place for training youth. My idea is not to establish a seminary or a Bible institute but to have the young people live a corporate life and practice spiritual life, that is, receive training for the purpose of edification and to learn to read the Scripture and to pray in order to build up good character, and on the negative side, to learn how to deal with sin, the world, the flesh, natural life, and so on. At a suitable time they are to return to their respective churches to be tempered together with other saints to serve the Lord in the church. I have bought some ten acres of land at Chenju in the suburbs of Shanghai. Plans for building are progressing, and soon, youths will be able to go there for training. (Watchman Nee's Testimony, pp. 40-41)

Another thing I want to make clear is our burden to have trainings to train the saints. Brother Nee conducted regular trainings for the saints in mainland China. I came out of mainland China to Taiwan in 1949. We started a formal training there for four months in 1953. From that year on, I set aside a few months nearly every year for the training of the saints. (Elders' Training, Book 9, p. 55)

If the gifted persons—the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers—do their perfecting work, spontaneously all the perfected saints will do the same work that they do. The saints will participate in the work of the ministry, which is to build up the Body of Christ. Ephesians 4 tells us that the church as the Body of Christ is not built up by the gifted persons directly. Their work is to perfect the saints. Then the perfected saints do the direct building of the Body of Christ (vv. 11-12). (p. 99)

In the book of Ephesians, Paul tells us that the gifts—the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers—are for the perfecting of the saints (4:11-12). Then Acts 20 shows us how the writer of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul, perfected the saints in Ephesus. The book of Ephesians presents the teaching given to the saints in Ephesus, while Acts 20 presents the practice of the writer. The teaching in Ephesians 4 and the practice in Acts 20 are by the

same apostle. Paul taught the perfecting of the saints and he practiced it. (p. 107)

The genuine perfection of the saints must be in the church and under the ministry. Today the Lord's ministry is criticized, slandered, and scorned. If the eyes of the believers are opened, they will see what the ministry is and where is it today. In the church the ministry is needed to perfect the saints unto the work of ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ. ... In these days I bear a very heavy burden concerning the perfecting of the saints. This burden cannot be discharged until I see that all the saints are able to do the same kind of work as was done by the early apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers...Children are perfected by feeding and by training. The same is true with respect to perfecting the saints according to God's economy. The saints need to be fed and they need to be trained so that they may function with the proper skill. (Life-Study of Ephesians, pp. 351-352)

To the present moment, I have not yet discharged my burden in the matter of training. We need to be trained for the practice of the church life. This means that the training should enrich and uplift our practice of the church life. Although the help given to the saints thus far is far from adequate, we cannot deny the fact that since coming into the Lord's recovery many saints have undergone some training. This is evident as we listen to them testify or pray in the meetings. However, the need remains for more thorough and complete training. My burden is that after a period of time, perhaps after three or four years, virtually all the saints in the Lord's recovery in this country will have been adequately trained. (p. 353)

THE PURPOSE OF TRAINING

In order to be perfected, we must pay attention to life and to function. The way to be perfected is to grow in life and to become skillful in function. The Greek word rendered "perfecting" here also means completing, equipping, furnishing. To perfect a saint is to complete him, to equip him, and to furnish him. Only by growing in life can we be completed. Not until we become

mature will we be completed... The saints need to be fed and they need to be trained so that they may function with the proper skill. (p. 352)

To be trained is to have the rich supply of Christ ministered to us that we may grow, and it is to be equipped that we may be skillful in speaking, in contacting new ones, in shepherding, and in preaching and teaching. (p. 353)

If we enjoy such a Christ, we will surely grow in life. In the previous chapter we saw that the growth in life issues in the development of the gifts. We also have to realize that according to 1 Corinthians 3, the growth in life first issues in the precious materials for the building up of the church (vv. 6-7, 12). For us to be transformed into gold, silver, and precious stones is not for individual spirituality. As the materials, we must be precious because we are for God's building. The growth in life first issues in the precious materials for God's building and then in the development of the gifts. To build any kind of building, first you need the materials. Then you need the skills to build it. The materials and the skills are the issues of the growth in life by our enjoyment of the all-inclusive, processed Christ, who is the embodiment of the Triune God, as the life-giving Spirit. The ultimate consummation of the enjoyment of Christ for the growth in life is the church built with the materials and by the skills. (Elders' Training, Book 9, p. 105)

THE GOAL OF TRAINING

Arriving at the High Peak of the Divine Revelation

Before 1984 God's eternal economy as the very reality and the center of the Bible was never seen by God's people so fully as today among us. ...No other book has pointed out that God's eternal economy has Christ as its center and reality, with His Body, the organic Body of Christ, as the organism to the Triune God.

Today we have come to this high peak of God's divine revelation. ...Even ...we have probably reached the highest peak of the divine revelation in the entire Bible. This is the divine revelation discovered by the believers through the past twenty centuries. (Living a Life According to the High Peak of God's Revelation, pp. 37-38)

Our God, the moving and acting God, made an eternal economy in Himself for Christ in eternity past (Eph. 1:9-10; 3:9-11). In this economy as a plan, an arrangement, God decided to produce an organic Body to be His organism in life for His increase and expression. To carry this out, God Himself had to become a man that man might become God. He accomplished this by the way of union and mingling. Eventually, God and man did unite together and mingle together. ...God became a man so that He could make man like Himself in life and in nature, but not in His Godhead (1 John 3:2). He became such a man and lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years to pass through and experience human life in order to set up a model of what a God-man is. (The Practical Points Concerning Blending, p. 8)

Becoming Today's Zion

Zion is the high peak, the center, the uplifting, the strengthening, the enriching, and the reality of the church, the holy city. If there are no overcomers in a local church, that church is like Jerusalem without Zion. ...A local church must have some overcomers, and these overcomers are the peak and the center of that local church. They are the uplifting, the strengthening, the enriching, and the reality of that local church. If you take away these overcomers from that local church, that local church becomes like a flat tire. The full-time training is for the producing of the overcomers. Once a church has some full-time workers as overcomers, that church is like Jerusalem with the peak of Zion. The overcomers as Zion are the highlight, the center, and the reality of the church. (The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, pp. 33-34)

Arriving at the Reality of the Body of Christ

Since we have seen such a high peak of the divine revelation, we need to put into practice what we have seen. Our practice will have a success, and that success will be a new revival—the highest revival, and probably the last revival before the Lord's coming back. ...We need a corporate model, a Body, a people who live the life of a God-man. From today our practice should be to live the life of a God-man by realizing the power of the resurrection of Christ to take His cross as He did, to be crucified, to be conformed to His death, every day to

live another One's life (Phil. 3:10; 1:21; Gal. 2:20). Our life, our self, our flesh, our natural man, and our everything were already brought to the cross by Him. Now we are living Him, so we should remain in His crucifixion to be conformed to the mold of His death every moment in every part of our life. That will cause us to spontaneously live Him as the resurrection (John 11:25). This is the living of a God-man.

A God-man is a man who is regenerated and transformed to be one with God, taking God as his life, his person, and his everything. Eventually, this one becomes God in His life and His nature, but not in His Godhead. This is g God-man. In the recovery today we should practice to live the life of such a God-man. This life is a life of crucifixion by and in and with resurrection.

This life is the life of the church and the life of the Body of Christ. Such a life is the reality of the Body of Christ. Such a life, like that of Jesus Christ in His thirty-three and a half years on the earth, saves us from all negative things, from small things and big things. In our marriage life it saves us from separation and divorce. In the church it saves us from opinion, division, despising, criticizing, and murmuring. In this life there is no criticism, no despising, no partiality, no division, no dissension, no opinion. (Living a Life According to the High Peak of God's Revelation, pp. 39-41)

THE PATTERN OF TRAINING

We practice this matter of training to follow what the Apostle Paul did, to follow in his footsteps. Acts 19:9-10 says, "But when some were hardened and would not be persuaded, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this took place for two years, so that all those dwelling in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." At that time Paul was in Ephesus, and there was already a church there. However, he did some work beside the church but related to and for the church. He did his preaching and teaching in a school, the school of Tyrannus. Tyrannus might have been a teacher, and Paul might have rented his school and used it as a meeting hall to preach and teach the word of the Lord. Paul's work was not within the church but was something beside the church yet still for the

churches. Paul felt that there was a need to have such a work to preach to and teach many people. He carried out this work in the school of Tyrannus for two years and the result was that all those dwelling in Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Acts 28:30-31 says, “And he remained two whole years in his own rented dwelling and welcomed all those who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered.” This tells us clearly that Paul rented a place to teach in Rome, and at that time there was a church in Rome. He did a work in his own rented dwelling to proclaim the kingdom of God and to teach the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. No doubt, his proclaiming, his teaching, and his preaching went out to reach a good number of people.

We had our trainings mainly based upon Paul’s example in the two passages we quoted above in Acts. We have a burden to train some seeking saints and some young saints with the word of the Lord. We have seen much blessing upon this work of training. I began to have formal trainings in the United States in 1974. Through these semi-annual trainings, I put out all the Life-studies on the entire New Testament. (Elders’ Training, Book 9, pp. 55-56)

THE CONTENT OF THE TRAINING

The next very crucial thing we have to train the full-timers in is that they must learn how to contact the Lord. Every day they must have a proper time to contact the Lord. Everyone must have a private time to pray to the Lord, to have a direct, private, personal contact with the Lord Himself. In our contact we should not pray for so many things, but we need to open to Him to be enlightened, exposed, and judged. We need to exhort them to have some direct dealing with the Lord. This is the way for them to grow up in life.

Pursuing to Know the Truth

We must also help them get into the Word. The best reference books for the young ones to study are the Recovery Version with the notes and the Life-study Messages. If they still have time, they can get into the

cross-references. If they use this material, they will get into the proper knowledge of God's New Testament revelation. We must train the saints to get into this material to have themselves equipped with the proper understanding of God's Word. (Elders' Training, Book 8, p. 165)

You must be clear of this way of recovery.... You must also know the truth and enter into the light which the Lord has shown us in these past sixty years. The light of these sixty years is the gathering of all the Scriptural knowledge of all those who pursue the Lord...plus what the Lord has shown us; hence, you must spend time to study and enter into it. (Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 3)

Pursuing The Progress In Life

You have to pursue the progress in life. First, you must pursue to know the Spirit, to know Christ, to know life, to know the cross, and to know resurrection, then you need to have the practical experiences of the Spirit, of Christ, and of the cross in many ways. As long as you have the heart, it is not that difficult to practice this matter. (Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 3)

In the Gospel and the Service

In giving us the revelation of the priesthood of the gospel of God, the raising up of the new believers, the perfecting of the saints, and prophesying, the Lord has given us a conclusion to our four and a half year study. I considered whether I could find any more verses in the New Testament concerning how to serve, how to meet, how to function, how to preach the gospel, etc. I believe that we have exhausted the revelation in the New Testament concerning the Christian way of service. We now have a conclusion to all the findings of the saints throughout the centuries. We must practice the New Testament priesthood of the gospel of God. The gospel of God regenerates sinners, making them the members of Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ. The gospel of God begins from the incarnation of the Triune God with the view of regenerating people and concludes with the New Jerusalem, which is the ultimate consummation of the building up of the Body of Christ. The gospel of God is not just telling people that they are sinners and that if they believe in Jesus, they will be saved and have peace and joy. This is only a small part of the gospel of God. The gospel of God is

all-inclusive. As the New Testament priests, we are handling the gospel of God to save sinners, to raise them up, and to perfect them until they can prophesy.

Only two chapters in the New Testament tell us in a clear and definite way how the building up of the Body of Christ takes place—Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 14. Ephesians 4 refers to the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the New Testament ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ. First Corinthians 14 reveals that prophesying is for the building up of the church. Prophesying is excelling because it builds up the church. Speaking in tongues is not excelling because it does not build up the church. This means that if we do not perfect the saints to prophesy, we have not reached the level of building up the church. Strictly speaking, there has been very little building up among us because we are short of the perfecting of the saints and the prophesying. We may care for having a big congregation, but do we care for the building up of the Body of Christ? We may only have the thought of edifying some of the saints to build them up as Christians. We do not have much thought concerning the direct building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ. The perfecting of the saints and prophesying for the building up of the church are missing among us. The Lord desires to recover these items for the building up of His organic Body. (Elders' Training, Book 9, pp. 138-139)

Building Up Their Character

One basic thing we like to train our young people in is their character. We have a little book with thirty aspects of human character. It is worthwhile to train them in this way. I consider this as something basic. ...I told the saints that if they did not build up their character, they could never read the Bible properly. A loose person in character could never understand the Bible in the right way. (Elders' Training, pp. 165-166)

You have to learn how to be a man, how to do things, and how to work. This can be said as all-inclusive. More than thirty years ago when I was having a training here, I said, "If you do not know how to be a man, you will not know how to do things; if you do not know how to do things, you surely will not

know how to work." I called this as the "three hows." It was at that time I spoke of the thirty character traits.... The secret is to build up your character. In the matters of doing things and working, you do not need to pay too much attention to them; you simply hold on to the "secrets" and focus on the efficiency. If you are too particular about things, you will lose your efficiency. But you have to hold on to the "secrets." In order to do things and work efficiently, you must first build up yourself in the matter of how to be a man. (Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 3)

n these sixty years, the trainings among us focus on four matters: first, truth; second, life; third, the gospel; and fourth, it can be said as service or the church, because the church and service are the two aspects of one thing. All the revelations and teachings in the New Testament are concluded in these four matters.... You have to progress and pursue these four matters--truth, life, the gospel, and service, but you also must pay attention to the learning of character, so that you may be well-equipped. I hope that you all will make a good use of your will to cooperate with the Lord in dealing with your character, so that you may be a useful vessel in the Lord's hand. (Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 6)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly the burden of the training according to Eph. 4:12.

2. What is the purpose of the training in the Lord's recovery?

3. What is the goal of the training in the Lord's recovery?

4. What are the main aspects of the content of the training in the Lord's recovery?

LESSON TWO

THE VISION OF THE TRAINING (1)

LIFE GROWS BY REGULATION

TOWARD MATURITY AND FUNCTION

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

Col. 2:19b …Holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

Gal. 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Hymn: 942

OUTLINE

I. The life of a Christian being a mingled life—the mingling of the human life and the divine life.

II. This life needing to grow up:

A. We need to grow with the growth of God—Col. 2:19.

Col. 2:19 … holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

B. The apostles planted the divine life into the human life—1 Cor. 3:6.

1 Cor. 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.

C. We need to grow up into Christ the Head—Eph. 4:15.

Eph. 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ.

1. The divine life mingled with the human life through our believing and being baptized—Eph. 4:5.

Eph. 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

2. We need to grow up into Christ the Head in this mingling and by the divine life.

III. Life growing by regulation—Gal. 5:25; 6:12; Rom. 4:12; Phil. 3:16:

Gal. 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Gal. 6:12 As many as desire to make a good show in the flesh, these compel you to be circumcised, but only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Rom. 4:12 And the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had in uncircumcision.

Phil. 3:16 Nevertheless whereunto we have attained, by the same rule let us walk.

A. All the teachings produce regulation.

B. We need the highest training of the strictest regulation to help us grow and live as kings.

C. Regulation produces certain character traits: such as, being genuine, and being accurate, etc.

D. The training creates an environment for us to grow.

IV. The goal of growth in life by regulation:

A. Maturity in life:

1. By confession of sins and by being filled with the Spirit

2. By becoming the wise virgins.

B. Function:

1. By diligent practice.

2. Accomplishing the Lord's commission.

REFERENCE

An Opening Word to the Full-time Trainees concerning Regulations and Opinions, Ch. 1.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN BEING A MINGLED LIFE

We know that it is good for us to be trained to have a proper character. In 1953 I taught thirty items of a proper character to a group of one hundred twenty trainees in Taipei, Taiwan (see the book entitled Character published by Living Stream Ministry). These thirty items of human character did not come from my personal living and personal practice. By the Lord's mercy I have learned that these items of a proper character are very crucial in our humanity. But in this message we want to focus our attention on a basic factor, that is, the matter of life. The life we are concerned with is the divine life mingled with our human life.

We are wonderful persons because we were created with the highest life in God's creation. In God's creation there are the plant life, the animal life, and the human life. In Genesis 1 you can see these three different levels of life. The human life is the highest among the created lives, yet it is not the top life in the universe. The top life in the universe is the divine life. Chapter two of Genesis shows the life which is signified by the tree of life. That life is a great mystery, yet we know that it is the life of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus' life is the life of the Triune God, the divine life. Thus, we can see that in the universe there are three lives in God's creation, and there is one life which is the uncreated life, the divine life.

The plant and animal lives are for the human life, and our human life is for the divine life. Not only is the human life for the divine life but also the divine life is for the human life. The human life is only for God. That means it is for the divine life. Also, the divine life is mainly for man. That means it is for the human life. Thus, we see that in the whole universe there are four kinds of lives. We do not count the angelic life, because it is a subsidiary life. We Christians have the human life mingled with the divine life. These two lives are for one another. When we use the simple word life, we are referring to this mingled life. Life denotes the human life for the divine life and the divine life for the human life.

THIS LIFE NEEDING TO GROW

Our spiritual life, the divine life, *zoe*, should grow. It does not need to grow in God, but it does need to grow in us. Colossians 2:19 says that we need to

grow with the growth of God. The divine life in God Himself is perfect, complete. It is at the highest peak and does not need any growth in itself. But when this life is mingled with our life, this mingled life needs to grow.

Ephesians 4:15 tells us that we all need to grow into the Head. The Head is Christ, the One who has the divine life mingled with His human life. The Head of the church is not merely the divine person. The divine person alone is not qualified to be the Head of the Body, which is the church. This Head needs to be the divine life mingled with the human life. We believers are humans who have received the divine life. We have the human life mingled with the divine life, so we are qualified to be the members of the Body of this Head. Now the divine life in us needs to grow. The human life in the Lord Jesus grew.

Just by your human life, you are not qualified to have an organic union with the Head. The organic union with the Head depends upon the divine life mingled with your human life by faith and baptism (Eph. 4:5). By believing and being baptized, we all have been put into this organic union. In this organic union we, who have the human life, received the divine life. The mingling began here. In this mingling we need to grow with the divine life into the Head, and this divine life is God Himself. Colossians 2:10 says that we grow with the growth of God. This means that we grow with the growth of the divine life. Thus, we are growing with God as the divine life into the Head.

LIFE GROWING BY REGULATION

Among today's Christians there is very little talk about such growth. Sometimes they might use the word growth, but not according to its biblical denotation. According to the biblical denotation, our growth in the divine life is to grow with God Himself increasing in us. God increasing in us means that He is added into our being. In this way we grow up into the Head in all things.

We need to see that even such a growth need to be regulated. ...The full-time training is the top and strictest teaching. It is a regulation. We Christians who want to serve the Lord need this kind of teaching, this kind of training, this kind of regulation. In the training, you are restricted. ...Such restriction and regulation helps you to grow.

Now you have dedicated yourself to being full-time. You are not going to do a business or a job; you are going to carry out a heavenly commission, a divine commission, the commission of the King. The royal family in Great Britain has to train a king or a queen from the time of his or her youth. Without such training, one would never be a king. He would not be qualified to be a king. You do not need any training to be a hippie or a loose person. But to be a king, you need the top training, and the top training is the strictest regulation to help you grow.

We Christians must be regulated. When I was teaching the thirty items of human character, some so-called spiritual people told me that I was teaching something which contradicted my ministry. They said that I always ministered life to people but that now I was teaching people about human character, which was building up human effort. But they did not understand the proper experience of the growth in life. The growth in life, our human being's growth in the divine life, needs regulation. Every regulation results in a certain character trait.

You like to be free. To be free means not to be regulated. You may not like to be regulated by anybody. But when you are not regulated, you are through with the growth. To put you in the training is to put you in an environment for your growth. The training is the best environment for you to grow. I encourage all of you to remain here for a full term of four months. Do not quit. Do not ask for a leave. Stay to the end. To the end means to the termination. You have to be here to be terminated. Then you will go back with a lot of growth. Sisters, you will greatly surprise your mother when you go back. She will be shocked at your growth. This is not according to some philosophical thinking. This is fully revealed in the Bible. Life grows by regulation.

THE GOAL OF OUR GROWTH BY REGULATION

This growth by regulation has a goal, and this goal is maturity and function. We do not desire to train you with biblical knowledge according to the letter as they do in a seminary. We are cooperating with our God that He may give you more growth, that He may give you the maturity you need. Then you will be useful, and that usefulness is your function. The usefulness is function, and

the function issues from maturity. The little babes cannot function in a useful way because they are short of the maturity in life. As a little child grows, his function increases. You cannot charge an elementary child to study college lessons. This little child has to grow to the full age. Then he will be able to study the college lessons. The function always comes out of maturity.

Since you desire to be very useful in the Lord's hands, you need to realize that you need the maturity. This maturity comes out of growth. Without growth, even if you have the divine life, there is no maturity. The life plus the growth gives you the maturity. This growth always comes from the coordination of regulation with life. The divine life is precious, the regulation is lovely, and the growth is so valuable because it issues in maturity which gives you the function. Then you can fulfill your aim and goal of being a full-timer. This goal is to carry out God's divine and heavenly commission.

Matthew 25 speaks concerning the virgins and concerning the slaves. On the one hand, we are virgins and on the other hand, we are slaves. As virgins, we need the growth to reach maturity. Of course, the words growth and maturity are not mentioned in Matthew 25 but these two items are there. This portion of the Word says that the wise virgins have oil both in their lamps and in their vessels (v. 4). The lamp signifies our spirit (Prov. 20:27), and the vessel signifies our soul, our being (Rom. 9:21, 23). Both in our spirit and in our entire being, we should be full of the oil, which signifies the Holy Spirit (Isa. 61:1; Heb. 1:9). This is not the outpoured Spirit but the infilling Spirit. This Spirit fills our spirit and our entire being. To fill our spirit is to light the lamp, and to fill our being is to fill the entire vessel with the spiritual oil. The infilling of the spiritual oil actually is the growth reaching maturity. The more you grow, the more you will be filled within with the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is the divine life, and the infilling of this Spirit of God is the Growth of this divine life.

Matthew 25 also speaks of the slaves. What the slaves need is to function, and this function depends upon diligence. Diligence is another trait of a proper character. Your function needs maturity, but without diligence, you cannot function. Everyone who has reached maturity is a very diligent one. You need to fellowship with the Lord, pray to Him, receive His enlightenment,

and be dealt with by Him. A slothful person would never contact the Lord regularly. In order to grow and reach maturity, you need to be diligent. The slave who would not invest his talent was evil and slothful. He would not use the talent given to him by the Lord. He hid his talent in the earth.

You must learn to be filled with the Spirit that you may grow in life to reach maturity. Then you need to exercise yourself to be diligent so that you can use the ability in maturity to serve the Lord to produce something for Him. Now you can see what the training wants you to do. (An Opening Word to the Full-time Trainees concerning Regulations and Opinions, Ch. 1)

QUESTIONS

1. What kind of life does a Christian have? Why does it need to grow?
2. Why does the life of a Christian grow by regulations?
3. What is the goal of the growth in life by regulation?

LESSON THREE

THE VISION OF THE TRAINING (2)

OLDNESS AND OPINION

BEING VERSUS REVELATION AND OBEDIENCE

Scripture Reading:

Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

1 Cor. 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

Hymn: 395

OUTLINE

I. The revelation bringing in obedience:

A. The proper regulation comes from the revelation. This type of regulation brings us into the proper obedience.

B. Saul of Tarsus firstly received the heavenly vision then was obedient to this vision—Acts 26:19.

Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

II. Revelation and obedience being versus oldness and opinion:

A. The problem with Peter's oldness—Acts 10:9-14.

Acts 10:9 And on the next day as they were journeying and drawing near to the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray around the sixth hour.

Acts 10:10 And he became very hungry and wanted to eat. And while they were preparing, a trance came upon him;

Acts 10:11 And he beheld heaven opened, and a certain vessel like a great sheet descending, being let down by four corners onto the earth,

Acts 10:12 In which were all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth and birds of heaven.

Acts 10:13 And a voice came to him: Rise up, Peter; slay and eat!

Acts 10:14 But Peter said, By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything

common and unclean.

B. The problem with Barnabas's opinion—Acts 15:35-39.

Acts 15:35 And Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and announcing the word of the Lord as the gospel with many others also.

Acts 15:36 Now after some days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brothers in every city in which we announced the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.

Acts 15:37 And Barnabas intended to take John, who is called Mark, along with them also;

Acts 15:38 But Paul did not consider it suitable to take with them this one who withdrew from them in Pamphylia and did not go with them to the work.

Acts 15:39 And there was a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; and Barnabas, taking Mark along, sailed away to Cyprus.

C. The problem with Apollos's oldness and opinion—Acts 18:24-28; 19:1-7; 1 Cor. 1:12; 16:12.

Acts 18:24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, an eloquent man, arrived at Ephesus, and he was powerful in the Scriptures.

Acts 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Acts 18:26 And this man began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him to themselves and expounded the way of God to him more accurately.

Acts 18:27 And when he intended to pass through into Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he arrived there, he helped much through grace those who had believed;

Acts 18:28 For he vigorously confuted the Jews publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Acts 19:1 Now while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper districts, came down to Ephesus and found some disciples,

Acts 19:2 And he said to them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said to him, On the contrary, we did not even hear whether there is a Holy Spirit.

Acts 19:3 And he said, Into what then were you baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism.

Acts 19:4 And Paul said, John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe into the One coming after him, that is,

into Jesus.

Acts 19:5 And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 19:6 And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Acts 19: 7 And there were in all about twelve men.

1 Cor. 1:12 Now I mean this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.

1 Cor. 16:12 And concerning our brother Apollos, I urged him many times to come to you with the brothers; yet it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.

III. The proper way of training dealing with our oldness and opinion:

A. The training does not give us a choice.

B. We need to take care of the Lord's goal and arrive at this goal.

C. We need to drop our opinions whenever we come to God's word.

D. We should learn not to express any opinion in any kind of situation.

E. Both Aquila and Timothy did not express any opinion whenever they were asked to do something.

REFERENCE

An Opening Word to the Full-time Trainees concerning Regulations and Opinions, Ch. 2.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

REVELATION BRINGING IN OBEDIENCE

Life grows by regulation toward maturity and function....The proper regulation comes from revelation, and this kind of regulation that comes from revelation always brings us into the proper obedience. Regulation comes from revelation, and revelation brings us into obedience. Only one kind of obedience can be counted worthy in the eyes of God, and that is the obedience that comes out of revelation (cf. Acts 26:19).

REVELATION AND OBEDIENCE
BEING VERSUS OLDNESS AND OPINIONS

In this message I want to talk with you about oldness and opinions versus revelation and obedience. Throughout my many years in the Lord's service, in the Lord's ministry, I have seen many cases of oldness and even more cases of opinion. In the church life among the saints, opinions are more prevalent than oldness. Oldness is terrible, but opinions are much more common among human beings. Every human being is a constitution of opinions. All of us were born sinful and have been constituted with opinions. Even though it has been a while since you have been regenerated, your constitution still is probably full of opinions.

The book of Acts tells us that the early church passed through a number of troubles. ...[one of the] trouble was with Peter due to his oldness. He was the top one used by the Lord at his time, and he was the leading one both in the church life and in the ministry. He was such a wonderful person. But when we read chapter ten of Acts, we realize that Peter was somewhat short, and his shortage was due to his oldness. He was holding on to his old understanding of God's way because he was born, raised up, and taught as a Jew.

Without such a record in Acts 10, you could not imagine that Peter would be like this. He loved the Lord to the uttermost. We should not forget that when he was debating with the Lord, he was not doing anything sinful. He was on the housetop praying. As such a godly person who was so much in the spirit, he was exercising to contact the Lord. He was in such a good condition and atmosphere, yet there was the disobedience with him due to his oldness.

When Paul was a new convert, Barnabas ushered him into the church and into the ministry (11:22-26). At first Barnabas was the one who took the lead. Even when they were sent on their first trip, Barnabas was the leader at the beginning (13:1-2). Later in their journey, however, Paul began to take the lead in the apostolic ministry (13:9; 14:12). After Paul was in the lead, Barnabas eventually became opinionated, not in secular things but in the holy ministry. If the Bible did not have such a record, we could never imagine that Barnabas could be that much opinionated to insist on taking his cousin with

them. Paul and Barnabas were divided not by a great doctrine such as that of the Divine Trinity but because of Barnabas's cousin.

THE NEED TO DEAL WITH OUR OPINIONS AND OLDNESS

One major thing which shows you that you are not opinionated is that you simply follow the brothers. This is not so easy, especially if you are older than the other brothers. It is also not easy for many of the sisters to follow the brothers. Some sisters may say that God is not fair, because the woman must always be under the man (1 Cor. 11:3). Even after they get saved and come into the church, they still hold this opinion.

Throughout the years I have seen the damage caused by opinions. When I was on mainland China with Brother Nee, he was like a big umbrella taking the lead. All the troubles from opinions went to him. Then the Lord brought me out of China and put me in the Western world, where I had to take the lead. I saw the damage caused by different opinions. Very rarely did I adjust these opinions, because I do not like to make an issue of anything.

Now that you are in the full-time training, you have to learn how to take the regulations. Regulations do not give you any ground for opinion. When you drive a car, you have your choice, but when you get on a train, you do not have any choice. Now that you are in the training, you are on the train. That means you are under the regulations. The training gives you the regulations to help you grow in life, and these regulations spontaneously kill our opinion.

I have seen many of the Lord's servants through the years. The most useful ones are the ones without opinions. They do not care for their opinions. They care for only one thing—the main goal. They stick themselves to the main goal, which is the carrying out of God's purpose. If a driver's main purpose is to get to the airport in Los Angeles, what way we take to get there does not really matter. To debate about which way to take is to waste time. You have to learn how to stick yourself to the main goal. Forget about different ways to express your opinion. You young saints who are learning how to serve must learn this one thing.

The thirty items of a proper character, to which [I referred in the previous message], are very helpful to us. But in another sense, each of these items is your enemy. Each item is your enemy because each item regulates you. This regulation is a killing. Each of the thirty items of a proper character kills your opinion. Your problem in serving the Lord is your opinion.

One trainee told us that the rooms in which the trainees stayed were too small. Every opinionated person is a good-hearted one. If you did not have a heart for anything, you would have no opinion. A piece of stone has no opinion, but because your heart is strong and good, you have an opinion. If you did not have a heart for others, you would have no opinion. Because this trainee has a good heart for the other trainees, his opinion came out. When you come to a new place and do not express any opinion, that is wonderful.

Both opinions and oldness are big enemies to us. For us to be useful in the Lord's hand we must deal with these things. I have been reading the Bible for many years, and I have expounded the entire New Testament. But whenever I come to a portion of the Word, I do not consider that I know that much, because I want to see more. If I could have another series of Life-studies on the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, these Life-studies would be new and different. Our understanding of the Word should not be set or settled. We must always keep ourselves young, new, and fresh with a learning and open spirit when we come to the Bible.

The technology in the world is always improving, but much of the time we remain the same in the Lord's work. If we stay in our oldness, the Lord cannot move on. We must learn these two things—never to be old and not to have any opinion. I assure you that if you would not be old, revelation will come to you every day. Oldness covers your view and causes you to be opaque. It covers your inner eyes to prevent you from seeing something new of the Lord. The trouble with today's Christianity is oldness. They say they keep the truth, but actually they are keeping their oldness. They would not have any kind of adjustment according to the revelation of the Bible. Peter and Apollos both remained in their oldness. To remain in their oldness was for them to be natural.

Your oldness will kill you, and your opinion will bury you. Look at the real situation. Out of one hundred, it is difficult to find five who are not old and who are without opinion. In this training you have to practice what I have told you. First, we saw that life grows by regulation toward maturity and function. Then we saw that oldness is versus revelation and opinion is versus obedience. If you are an opinionated person, you cannot obey anyone.

It is hard to see any signs in the New Testament that Paul was opinionated. Yet we see two persons related to him who were very opinionated—Barnabas and Apollos. On the one hand, he had trouble with Barnabas's opinion; on the other hand, he had trouble with Apollos's opinion. So these two dear brothers were through with working together with Paul. Aquila was different. Timothy was also different. When Paul asked Timothy to remain somewhere, he remained (1 Tim. 1:3). When Paul asked Timothy to come to him, he came (2 Tim. 4:21a). Apollos was a good brother who knew the Bible, but when Paul urged him to go to Corinth, he would not go. He did not want to go at Paul's desire, but at his desire. Today in the ministry we have the same trouble.

The full-time training is to train you to take the regulations. That means that you are being trained to drop the oldness and you are learning not to have any opinions. You have to get out of your oldness. Also, as long as the church and the ministry are going on toward the main goal, you have to forget your opinions. (An Opening Word to the Full-time Trainees concerning Regulations and Opinions, pp. 11-20)

QUESTIONS

1. Why does revelation bring in obedience?

2. Why are revelation and obedience versus oldness and opinion? Explain with an illustration.

3. Why does the training deal with our oldness and opinion?

LESSON FOUR

CHARACTER

Scripture Reading:

2 Tim. 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Rom. 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.

Hymn: 403

OUTLINE

I. The importance of character—2 Tim. 2:20-21:

2 Tim. 2:20 But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor.

2 Tim. 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.

A. Our character is the greatest enemy and problem in our equipping of the truth and growth in life.

B. Our character is the foundation and life pulse of our service and coordination.

C. Our character is related to the building up of the church and going on of the word in the Lord's recovery.

II. The meaning of character:

A. Disposition: the makeup of a person inside; the makeup from natural birth; the natural constitution, including: the old man, the "I," the self, the soul life, the natural person expressed in opinion, ambition, and peculiarity—Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:25; Matt. 16:25-26; Luke 9:24.

Rom. 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Matt. 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Luke 9:25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?

Matt. 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.

Matt. 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?

Luke 9:24 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake, this one shall save it.

B. Character: the expression of a person outside, the disposition inside expressed in the character outside, thirty percent being of disposition (of the human life or by the natural birth), seventy percent being of habit, and being seen in the living, work, and being of a person.

III. Dealing with character:

A. Dealing with disposition:

1. Through the breaking of the outer man—2 Cor. 4:16.

2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

2. Through living under the cross—Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6.

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Rom. 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves.

3. Through rebelling against the self, denying the self, and losing the soul life—Matt. 16:24-26.

Matt. 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let

him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Matt. 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.

Matt. 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?

4. Through a process of being sifted—2 Cor. 11:23-33; Acts 27—28.

2 Cor. 11:23 Ministers of Christ are they? I speak as being beside myself, I more so! In labors more abundantly, in imprisonments more abundantly, in stripes excessively, in deaths often.

2 Cor. 11:24 Under the hands of the Jews five times I received forty stripes less one;

2 Cor. 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep;

2 Cor. 11:26 In journeys often, in dangers of rivers, in dangers of robbers, in dangers from my race, in dangers from the Gentiles, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wilderness, in dangers in the sea, in dangers among false brothers;

2 Cor. 11:27 In labor and hardship; in watchings often; in hunger and thirst; in fastings often; in cold and nakedness—

2 Cor. 11:28 Apart from the things which have not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.

2 Cor. 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?

2 Cor. 11:30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things of my weakness.

2 Cor. 11:31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

2 Cor. 11:32 In Damascus, the governor under Aretas the king guarded the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me;

2 Cor. 11:33 And in a basket I was lowered through a window, through the wall, and escaped his hands.

Acts 27—28 be omitted.

5. Through transformation—Rom. 12:2.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

B. Dealing with character:

1. By the indwelling Spirit's putting to death of our habits—Rom. 8:13.

Rom. 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.

2. Exercising our will to coordinate with the Lord.

3. Through renewing—Eph. 4:22-24; Titus 3:5.

Eph. 4:22 That you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit,

Eph. 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind

Eph. 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.

Titus 3:5 Not out of works in righteousness which we did but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

IV. The learning, exercising, building up, and nurturing of character:

A. The learning of character—learning to be a proper person, to labor, and to work—1 Tim. 4:12.

1 Tim. 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

B. The exercise of character (in groups of three):

1. Genuine, Exact, Strict.

2. Diligent, Broad, Fine.

3. Stable, Patient, Deep.

4. Pure, Just, Calm.

5. Single, Corporate, Open.

6. Affectionate, Ardent, Accommodating.

7. Strong, Pliant, Submissive.

8. Suffering, Lowly, Poor.

9. Steadfast, Enduring, Bearing.

10. Clear, Magnanimous, and Grave.

C. The building up of character—Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 4:12:

"...What things are true, what things are dignified, what things are righteous, what things are pure, what things are lovely, what things are well spoken of, if there is any virtue and if any praise, take account of these things."

Phil. 4:8 Finally, brothers, what things are true, what things are dignified, what things are righteous, what things are pure, what things are lovely, what things are well spoken of, if there is any virtue and if any praise, take account of these things.

1 Tim. 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

V. The humanity of one who serves the Lord—Gen. 1:26; Gal. 2:20; Matt. 5:44; Luke 23:24:

Gen. 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Matt. 5:44 But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.

Luke 23:34 And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And dividing His garments, they cast lots.

A. To be like man—through humanity.

B. To have the highest virtues.

REFERENCE

The Character of the Lord's Worker, Ch. 1; Character, Chs. 1-5; Perfecting Training (1), Chs. 8-11; Vessels Useful to the Lord, Chs. 5, 6, 9, 12; The Experience and Growth in Life, Chs. 21-24, 28; Messages to the Trainees in Fall 1990, Chs. 1-2; The Glorious Vision and the Way of the Cross, Chs. 3-4.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISPOSITION AND CHARACTER

The personal life of a worker of the Lord is intimately related to his work. Therefore, we have to consider matters of character, habit, and conduct when considering the qualifications necessary to be in God's employment. This relates to the constitution of character and the formation of habits. A man must have not only a certain amount of spiritual experience, but a certain constitution in his disposition; the Lord must constitute a certain kind of disposition within him. Many things need to be built up, cultivated, and developed into habits within a worker. These things relate more to our outward man than to our inner man. As these things mold the outward man into a proper shape, we will become suitable for the Lord's use. It takes grace and mercy from God for this to occur; character is not built up in a day. But if the Lord gives a person enough light and if He speaks to him often enough, his natural and undesirable elements will be burned away, they will not be allowed to remain or grow. In His mercy, God will reconstruct a new character in him through resurrection. (The Character of the Lord's Worker, p. 1)

Our character can interrupt the Lord's work.... The success of the service in the church hinges on the building up of a good character.... Only a good character can meet the Lord's need of the age.... Whether our character is diligent or not matters the Lord's work.... Only with a strict character can we make progress in the Lord's work.... The degree of the pursuing of the truth and the learning of life depends on the exercise of the character.... Character is the life-pulse of service. (Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 5)

Only when our character is broken can we participate in the building.... Our greatest enemy is our character. The Bible says that death is God's last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). However, according to my observation, the last enemy of us who love and pursue the Lord is our character.... The biggest interruption to the Lord's work of recovery is our character. (Ch. 6)

For many years I have observed two great frustrating factors in the Lord's work: ambition and opinion....In the Lord's work, in the church life, and in the spiritual life, the greatest damaging factor is our opinion....The world and sin may not frustrate us from the growth in our spiritual life, but the ever present obstacle and frustration to our growth in our spiritual life is our

opinion....Opinion is the expression of our disposition and our disposition is the greatest problem for our growth in the divine life....According to my observation over many years, the real enemy of our growth in the divine life is our disposition. Our disposition is also the factor that spoils our usefulness in the hand of the Lord. (The Experience and Growth in Life, pp. 147, 148, 150, 166.)

If all the saints, especially those who are being trained to serve the Lord full-time, kill their disposition, everything will be very good. Otherwise, each trained one becomes a potential problem to the church. If we pick up the training and practice it with our ambition and capacity, trouble will be the result. If each trainee does not kill his or her disposition, each one is a problem and will be a problem. How useful you will be to the Lord or how much trouble you will make to the church depends upon how much your disposition is killed. Therefore, dealing with the disposition is a crucial matter. (pp. 163.)

THE MEANING OF CHARACTER

I have used the words “disposition” and “character” in my ministry concerning the spiritual life because I was forced to find terms which would help the saints to understand the soul-life, the self, the “I”, and the old man. The terms “natural life” and “natural” have also been used related to the spiritual experiences of dealing with our self. The self is our soulish life, and the soulish life is something natural. In addition to these terms, Paul mentions the old man in Romans 6:6. Each of these terms denotes a certain spiritual reality. With human beings there is something called the self, the soul-life. The soul-life is also called the old man. The self, the soul-life, and the old man are all something natural, something of the natural life.

In our fellowship concerning disposition and character, we do not use the definitions and denotations which are commonly used in the many dictionaries and lexicons. Rather, we define these terms according to their spiritual significance. Disposition refers to something within our being, and character refers to something in our outward being. Within we have our disposition, and without we have our character. Disposition is what we are

within, and character is what we express without. The inward disposition and the outward character are the extract, the essence, of our being.

The terms “character” and “disposition” cannot be found in the New Testament, but the facts are implied in verses such as Matthew 16:26 and Luke 9:25. Matthew 16:26 and Luke 9:25 are parallel portions which use self and soul-life as synonyms. The soul-life in Matthew 16:26 is the self in Luke 9:25. The soul is the life of the self, and the matters of disposition and character are very much related to both the self and the soul. (pp. 139-140.)

Our character is constituted of our inborn nature plus our acquired habits. Whereas disposition is inborn, character is cultivated. A person’s character is thirty percent nature and seventy percent habit. For this reason, a young person must pay full attention to character building. A person over the age of fifty has a set personality with a definite pattern that has been developed over his lifetime. In a young person, more inborn nature than acquired habit is manifested. As he grows older, he displays less of his nature and more of his habits. Consequently, acquired habits are more important than inborn nature. Generally, the character of a person over the age of twenty already contains more habit than nature. In considering the matter of character, we must give heed to our daily life, which is able to mold our character. The suitability of our character to God determines our usefulness to God. (Character, pp. 17-18.)

DEALING WITH OUR CHARACTER

We will fellowship about dealing with our disposition and character. The words “disposition” and “character” both have many different denotations in dictionaries and lexicons. We have used these words very much in their spiritual denotations for the last forty to fifty years. In one of the early trainings in Taiwan, we presented thirty points of character which were later published in the book Character. Later we began to stress the matter of our disposition very much. I have discovered that character is the expression of something inward, that is, the matter of disposition. Outwardly, it is character, but inwardly it is disposition. To deal with the character but neglect the disposition is futile. (The Experience and Growth in Life, p. 139.)

Our dealings with sins, sin, the world, and the conscience are superficial dealings, but our dealing with the disposition is the deepest dealing. To deal with sins and sin is relatively easy, but to deal with our disposition and character is very difficult. According to my study of the New Testament, we are charged to make confession of our sins and mistakes (1 John 1:8-9), but there is no charge to confess concerning our disposition or character. (p. 142)

Since our disposition and character cause problems in our Christian life, we have to deal with, take care of, or correct them, and even put them to death. Here the term "deal with" has both a positive and a negative side. ...In the New Testament, disposition and character are implied in such terms as self, soul-life, the old man, and the "I" in Galatians 2:20. These things are all related to the natural life. ...Actually, to deal with our disposition and character means to deal with our self, our old man, our soul-life, and the "I." (p. 143)

Dealing with Our Disposition

While there are no verses in the New Testament which directly tell how to deal with the disposition, there are a number of verses which can be used. Since the disposition is implied in the "I", the old man, the soul, and the self, our dealing with these things includes our dealing with the disposition. In Galatians 2:20, the "I" has been crucified. This "I" implies the disposition. In the same way, when we deny the self (Matt. 16:24) and lose the soul-life (Matt 16:25-26), the disposition is dealt with, because it is implied in these things. (p. 157)

Through Breaking of the Outer Man

[Brother Nee, passed through a] long turmoil in which he was prevented from ministering ...After the turmoil passed, one of the first messages he gave was on the breaking of the outer man and the release of the spirit. From that time on, the center of Brother Nee's speaking was almost always on the breaking of the outer man. The breaking of the outer man is the breaking of our disposition. I am still learning the lesson of how to deal with my disposition. Brother Nee warned us that if we do not learn the lesson of the

breaking of the outer man before we are fifty years old, we will have a difficult time in the church life. (p. 149)

Through Living Under the Cross

In order to deal with our disposition, we must realize that we have been crucified (Gal. 2:20; Rom 6:6). From morning to evening, throughout the entire day, we must remember that we are people who have already been crucified. Because we have been crucified, we should not live according to our disposition. We should not live, act, or walk according to what we are naturally. ... The way to deal with our disposition is to realize and remember that we are crucified persons and remain under that realization throughout the day.

Through Rebelling Against the Self, Denying the Self, and Losing the Soul Life

Along with the realization that we are crucified, we have to oppose ourselves. To oppose ourselves is to oppose our disposition. If you realize that your disposition is to be quiet, as long as you remain quiet, you are simply living according to your disposition. But if you would oppose your quiet disposition, you must first realize that your natural person has been crucified and then remain under the killing of the cross. Then in the meetings you, opposing yourself, can exercise to speak something of the Lord to the saints. (p. 158)

Dealing with Our Character

Dealing with our character is seen in Romans 8:13, which says, “For if you live according to flesh, you are about to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.” The practices of the body are actually our character. To deal with the practices of the body is to deal with our character. (p. 157)

By the Indwelling Spirit’s Putting To Death of Our Habits

Our character is composed thirty percent of our disposition and seventy percent of our habits. Our character is more troublesome than our disposition

because our character is composed of our disposition plus our habits. To deal only with our habits is not sufficient because our habits are only the outward expression of our character. In the Gospels, from the time the Lord first called Peter, the Lord took every opportunity to deal with Peter's character and disposition.

The practices of our body are part of our character. Habitually, we always do things a certain way. We have to put to death our habits by the indwelling Spirit. The only thing that can solve the problem of our disposition and character is the cross. (pp. 142, 149)

Exercising Our Will To Coordinate With The Lord

After more than sixty years of observation, I almost have never seen a person who is willing to receive the breaking of character and be changed in his character before fifty years of age. I confess that this is not an easy matter. However, I can also testify that this depends on how much you are willing to receive the Lord's grace and cooperate with the Lord. This altogether depends on your willingness.

As for our cooperation with the Lord, this relates to the basic principle in the Scriptures. When God created man, He created man with a free will and freedom to choose. This is the decision of our will.... Today God also puts us fallen ones between our character and Christ's salvation for us to choose. In a certain sense, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is our character, and the tree of life is Christ. This depends whether we want Christ or our character. (Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 6)

...You have to resolve to consecrate yourself to the Lord to become a useful vessel in His hands. Once you have the resolution, you need to exercise. The secret of your exercise is that from now on, you are not loose but exercise to be strict whether in big or small things. All the foundation depends on the exercise in your practical daily life. For example, you should return something to its original position, pay attention to tidiness and neatness, and do things according to schedule. Once you begin to exercise in this way, you will realize how loose you were in the past. If you only appreciate and are touched by this

kind of fellowship but do not exercise and practice in your daily living, this fellowship is entirely unprofitable for you. (p. 148)

Through Renewing

Transformation deals mainly with our disposition, and renewal deals mainly with our character. Both transformation and renewal simply mean to deal with our disposition and character. A transformed person will not remain in his old disposition, and a renewed person will not remain in his old character or expression. (The Experience and Growth in Life, p. 144)

THE LEARNING, THE EXERCISE, THE BUILDING UP, AND THE CULTIVATION OF CHARACTER

You have to learn how to be a man, how to do things, and how to work. This can be said as all-inclusive. More than thirty years ago when I was having a training here, I said, "If you do not know how to be a man, you will not know how to do things; if you do not know how to do things, you surely will not know how to work." I called this as "three hows." It was at that time I spoke of the thirty character traits.... The secret is to build up our character. In the matters of doing things and working, we do not need to pay too much attention to them; we can simply hold onto the "secrets" and focus on the efficiency. If you are too particular about things, you will lose your efficiency. But you have to hold onto the "secrets." For you to do things and work efficiently, you must first build up yourself in the matter of how to be a man. (Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 3)

Philippians 4:8 says, "...what things are dignified, ...what things are well-spoken of, if there is any virtue and if any praise, take account of these things." Look at your clothing and apparel. Do you give people a sense of dignity and can you gain their praise? This is not to say that you have to pay attention only to that aspect, but you have to pay attention to every single aspect. If you do not take account of or pay attention to these things, you will not be able to build up yourself.

Besides the building up of your character in how to be a man and how to do things, you also have to learn how to work. In the matter of the Lord's work,

there are several aspects in particular that require your learning. First, learn to contact man; second, learn to be an outlet of the word; and third, learn to visit people at home or at the campus. Once you have learnt all these aspects, you will be very useful in the Lord's recovery. (Ch. 3)

In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul said to Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." This word is very deep in significance. Here it says that let no one despise your youth, but if you dress improperly and speak inappropriately, how can people not despise your youth? If you conduct yourself frivolously and loosely, people will spontaneously despise your youth. Hence, Paul meant that Timothy should be dignified in behavior and proper in speech. How much should he speak, when should he speak, what should he speak, and how should he speak should gain others' respect so that no one would despise his youth.

Paul first mentioned word, then conduct, behavior, and action, and at last he required of love, faith, and purity. Love and faith are a matter of life, and word and conduct are a matter of character. Today we first speak of faith and love, then require of conduct and word. This is to put the cart before the horse and is opposite to what Paul had said. (Ch. 5)

THE HUMANITY OF ONE WHO SERVES THE LORD

Humanity refers to what a person is. This intrinsic being of a person eventually becomes a form that expresses itself before men. In English, ... the closest word may be personality. But this word only refers to the character of a person. This is still somewhat different from what a person is. Humanity emphasizes the outward expression; "personality" emphasizes the inward nature. Usually, whatever is within a man is expressed outwardly in a certain way or form. Therefore these two aspects are very close. One is inward and the other is outward. Inwardly it is the personality and outwardly it is the humanity. (The Glorious Vision and the Way of the Cross, p.40)

True Christian humanity not only comprises the divine attributes that fill us within; it also comprises the attributes that we received at creation. At the time man was created, he had only the image of God's attributes; he did not

have the content and reality of these attributes. This is why we all have to receive this God of creation into us to be our content. When He fills us, we can truly love Him. This is not to live ourselves but to live Him. It comes out of divinity and is expressed through humanity. This is the humanity a Christian should have.

In the New Testament, Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). It is true that Christ is living today; but we have to know that He lives within us. He is living Himself out from within us. This is what the Gospel of Luke reveals to us. This divine attributes of God are expressed through the human virtues of man. This divine nature is mingled with the human nature. This divine nature is the source and the content, and the human nature is the expression and the form. This is what we mean by humanity. We can also call it morality or virtue. It is a kind of character of a Christian and is something that every servant of the Lord should have. (p. 34)

To Be Like Man—Through Humanity

To be human is to take the proper way of a man. It is to have the proper moral ethic. The humanity of one who serves the Lord must be: 1) a coming forth of God and 2) fully human, that is, it must have the proper human flavor. If there is no human flavor, at best it will be like an angel, and at worst, it will be like a demon. For us to serve the Lord, we must not be like angels or demons. We have to be human, we must be like a man. If we go ...for the gospel outreach, and we give others the impression that we are like angels, I am afraid no one would dare to come close to us. Hence, we need to be human. This also is a part of our humanity.

To Have Excellent Virtues

The highest morality is one in which divinity is added to our humanity. This is the divine attributes of God expressed in the created virtues of man. It is also the most excellent virtue. According to our understanding of the Bible and our personal experience, there are seven items of these excellent virtues.

Extraordinary Love

Love is the first item of these excellent virtues. This love is extraordinary. We can love to an extent that we even love our enemies (Matt. 5:44).

Boundless Forbearance

To forbear is to forgive. When we forgive, our hearts have to be boundless. A narrow person cannot forgive. Hence, we need to have a boundless forbearance. We have to forbear to an extent that we can forgive our enemies and those who hate us.

According to our experience, it is easier to love our enemies than to forgive them. Sometimes we can love others but cannot forgive them. For example, I can love you, but I may not be able to forget that you have offended me. Because I love you, even though you are my enemy, I can give you a Bible. But it is very difficult for me to forget the offense that you have done to me. Hence, it is not easy to forgive. For this reason, the Lord set a good example for us in the Gospels. Although men reviled Him unceasingly while He was in earth, His last act on earth before He died was a prayer for man, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34a). This is boundless forbearance.

Unparalleled Faithfulness

We have to deal with others with consistency and in faithfulness. We should not betray others or the Lord. There must be unparalleled faithfulness.

Absolute Humility

Our humility has to be absolute. Not only do we have to be humble. We have to be in humiliation. To be humble is to be low, but to be humiliated is to be made small. To serve the Lord we need an absolute humility.

Utmost Purity

Not only do we have to be clean. We have to be pure as well. And this purity must be to the utmost.

Supreme Holiness and Righteousness

Towards God we have to be supremely holy, and towards man we have to be supremely righteous. Towards God we have to be fully separated, and toward man, we have to be fully proper, with no fault whatsoever. This is supreme holiness and righteousness.

Brightness and Uprightness

The first item is love, and the last item is light. The brightness to which we refer here is different from the brightness the world talks about. Here we mean light. We have to walk in light. Everything we do must be in the light and must not be in darkness. We must be thoroughly upright and forthright, and must not be narrow-minded or suspicious in any way.

All the seven items combined give a proper humanity for a servant of the Lord.

In conclusion, the Christian humanity is a life lived out through the mingling of the divine attributes and the created human morality. May the Lord preserve us to serve Him all the days of our life, without turning back or deviating. May we all live out the proper humanity of one who serves the Lord. The Lord be merciful to us all. (pp. 35-37)

AN APPENDIX ON THE THIRTY POINTS OF CHARACTER

A. The First Group—Genuine, Exact, Strict:

1. Genuine—Genuineness forms one's foundation and base. Genuineness in character is the ability to sacrifice for others. Over time, it is genuineness which gains people's hearts.

2. Exact—One who is punctual does not procrastinate. One who is accurate in his words is dependable, and one who is precise in his work is trustworthy.

3. Strict—Genuineness and tightness make up exactness, which in turn is manifested in strictness. He who is exact is always strict. The secret to a punctual person is his strictness. Only by being strict can one be genuine and exact.

B. The Second Group—Diligent, Broad, Fine:

1. Diligent—Not slothful. All lazy people pity and love themselves,

and thus naturally love to eat and sleep (Romans 12:1; Proverbs 6:6; Titus 1:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). All four points mentioned above are related to dealing severely with oneself.

2. Broad—It is easy for one who possesses the foregoing character traits to become narrow. "God gave Solomon…largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore" (1 Kings 4:29).

3. Fine—A person with a broad capacity often fails to be fine, leading to negligence and inevitable loss. One ought to be broad but not rough, fine but not small.

C. The Third Group—Stable, Patient, Deep:

1. Stable—To be stable is to be solid and not easily moved, not panicky, hasty, or anxious. Stability, however, differs from slowness. Being slow means not acting when there is time to act, while being stable means allowing time to do its work. A stable person does not make decisions lightly or carelessly, nor does he easily praise or condemn others. When a situation is not entirely clear to him, he stops and does not speak or express his opinions carelessly.

2. Patient—Patient here does not refer to endurance but to the ability to wait, as mentioned in James 5:7, "The farmer awaits the precious fruit of the earth." Patience differs from slowness. To be slow is to miss a present opportunity, whereas to be patient is to anticipate a coming opportunity. Patience is not passivity; it is aggressiveness without anxiety.

3. Deep—To be deep is to be not shallow or superficial. It is to base one's judgment on evidence rather than appearance. It is neither to be nagging nor to be bothersome, but simply to be serious.

D. The Fourth Group—Pure, Just, Calm:

1. Pure—To be pure and unadulterated is a matter of motive, of being free of ulterior intentions. (Deuteronomy 22:9)

2. Just—To be just means to be unbiased, to handle all matters fairly. To be just, one must be impartial, paying attention to each aspect of a person or matter, appraising it from different angles and putting it in its proper place.

3. Calm—To be calm in his mind, emotion and will. The way to

practice calmness is by (1) not acting quickly and (2) not believing rumors, which inevitably cause agitation.

E. The Fifth Group—Single, Corporate, Open:

1. Single—To be single and unscattered is related to being pure, just and calm. A person should either not undertake a task at all or do it single-mindedly. He must be single, whether he is studying, managing a home, or doing business.

2. Corporate—To be corporate is to be not individualistic, selfish or reclusive. Singleness in character must be balanced by a corporate quality.

3. Open—An open believer is able to receive spiritual help. He who is the most open receives the most help and can be the most helpful. However, this must not be a natural and unrestrained openness but one that, like doors and windows, can be opened and closed readily. Matters that are absolutely personal, private, and unrelated to others need not be disclosed. It is unnecessary to be open concerning matters in which one does not need help or cannot offer help, since such openness is futile.

F. The Sixth Group—Affectionate, Ardent, Accommodating:

1. Affectionate—Affectionate implies both nearness and love. In particular, it stresses care, sympathy and intimacy.

2. Ardent—Whereas affection is in the heart, ardor implies outward action. It is fervent and powerful.

3. Accommodating—Herein is the principle of incarnation. One must reach out to others in order to lead them to salvation.

G. The Seventh Group—Strong, Pliant, Submissive:

1. Strong—Strength denotes firmness, not hardness. One ought to be strong but not hard, that is, strong in will but not hard in heart.

2. Pliant—Strength must be matched by pliancy. Strength without pliancy is hardness, which inevitably spoils things, whereas pliancy without strength results in softness, which also is useless.

3. Submissive—To be submissive is to be obedient and yielding. A person who can best give orders is the person who can best receive them. Submission is an element of the divine life. Those who

possess this life do not consider it shameful but proper to submit and to take orders. The one who gives orders bears a heavy responsibility; those who take them bear none. How blessed it is to listen to others and to be covered in everything.

H. The Eighth Group—Suffering, Lowly, Poor:

1. Suffering—Suffering works endless wonders. There are some things which one cannot pass through without suffering. The more a person is able to suffer, the more useful he is. One who is not ready to suffer cannot accomplish great things. Fitting is the ancient proverb, "He who endures the worst of sufferings is the best among men."

2. Lowly—One should aim high but conduct himself in a lowly way. Romans 12:16 says that we should be "led away to the lowly." Only by taking a lowly position can one help others. This is not to pretend to be humble but rather to genuinely confess from the heart that one has nothing of which to boast. First Peter says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

3. Poor—The world covets position and riches, but a Christian must be content with and even choose poverty. Poverty has its usefulness as well as its delight. However, one should not make himself poor by being lazy. Such poverty is worthless and futile. A willingness to be poor for the Lord's sake when one has the ability and even the opportunity to be rich, or a practice of spending all one's money for the Lord, are both rare and precious. The life of Christ is a life that chooses to be poor.

I. The Ninth Group—Steadfast, Enduring, Bearing:

1. Steadfast—Steadfast means persevering. The best is usually reserved for last. Anything that grows quickly also withers quickly. Nothing that is deep, weighty, and superior can be obtained in a short time or by chance. Specifically, there are no shortcuts in spiritual things. Steadfastness and perseverance are the prerequisites for gaining that which is excellent. To be steadfast is to not covet the grand and quick results. There is an old saying that "drops of water eventually can penetrate a stone."

2. Enduring—One who is able to endure is able to withstand mistreatment. Do not mistreat others, but endure their

mistreatment. A young man should not avoid ill-treatment and take the easy way out; rather, he should suffer abuse willingly. The more difficult the lesson, the deeper and more profitable it is.

3. Bearing—A person of character must be able to bear pressure. Anything that is solid and strong must first be pressed. A diamond is formed through intense pressure. That which grows without restriction usually is not beautiful. However, do not invite others to put pressure on you; rather, you should put yourself under pressure. The combination of the five preceding character traits—suffering, lowly, poor, steadfast and enduring—gives a person the ability to bear pressure.

J. The Tenth Group—Clear, Magnanimous, Grave:

1. Clear—Clarity here does not mean brightness; it denotes understanding. People are often ignorant of their own dullness and stupidity. One should know himself as well as others.

2. Magnanimous—Being magnanimous is similar to being broad. To be broad is to be tolerant of others, and to be magnanimous is to not be cruel to others. In dealing with others, one must supplement affection, ardor, and accommodation with magnanimity. It is difficult to have an enemy-loving life without a magnanimous character. A cruel person is always jealous, while a magnanimous person is able to forgive. It is permissible to speak severely to others, but never cruelly. Neither should one be foolishly kind.

3. Grave—One who is grave is not frivolous. Whatever a grave person does carries weight. Whether a matter is great or small, its importance and weight depend on whose hands it is in. In learning to be grave, first, one should not express his opinions lightly; second, one should not judge or criticize flippantly; and third one should speak slowly and accurately. It is not that one should be silent but that one should speak with discretion. He who is grave is protected, for evil temptations do not come to him easily. Especially in the case of a young woman, gravity brings protection, while lightness invites harm. Be affectionate, ardent, and accommodating toward others, and conduct yourself with gravity. (cf. Character pp. 1-15)

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the importance of character.
2. What is the difference between disposition and character?
3. How should we deal with our disposition and character?
4. Recite the thirty character traits.

LESSON FIVE

THE APOSTLES' TEACHING

Scripture Reading:

Heb. 1:1-2 God, having spoken of old in many portions and in many ways to the fathers in the prophets, Has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom also He made the universe;

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Titus 1:9 Holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who oppose.

Hymn: 832

OUTLINE

I. The apostles' teaching is the entire speaking of God in the New Testament. It is God's entire speaking in the Son to His New Testament believers—Heb. 1:1

Heb. 1:1 God, having spoken of old in many portions and in many ways to the fathers in the prophets,

Heb. 1:2 Has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom also He made the universe.

A. God's speaking in the Son as the Man in the four Gospels—John 14:10; 5:24; 16:12; 10:30.

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, He who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life.

John 16:12 I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

John 10:30 I and the Father are one.

B. God also spoke in the Son as the Spirit through the apostles, in Acts and the twenty-one Epistles (Romans to Jude)—John 16:12-15; Matt. 28:19-20; Heb. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:15-16; Col. 1:25-27.

John 16:12 I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

John 16:13 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.

John 16:14 He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will declare it to you.

John 16:15 All that the Father has is Mine; for this reason I have said that He receives of Mine and will declare it to you.

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Matt. 28:20 Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age.

Heb. 2:3 How shall we escape if we have neglected so great a salvation, which, having had its beginning in being spoken by the Lord, has been confirmed to us by those who heard,

Heb. 2:4 God bearing witness with them both by signs and wonders and by various works of power and by distributions of the Holy Spirit according to His will?

2 Pet. 3:15 And count the long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation, even as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you,

2 Pet. 3:16 As also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Col. 1:25 Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

Col. 1:26 The mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations but now has been manifested to His saints;

Col. 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

C. God spoke in the Son, who became the Seven Spirits, through the Apostle John in Revelation—Rev. 1:2, 4; 2:1, 7.

Rev. 1:2 Who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, even all that he saw.

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace

from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.

Rev. 2:1 To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write: These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

Rev. 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

D. God's speaking concerning the New Testament teaching is completed through Paul and John—Col. 1:25-27; Rev. 22:18-19.

Col. 1:25 Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

Col. 1:26 The mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations but now has been manifested to His saints;

Col. 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Rev. 22:18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this scroll;

Rev. 22:19 And if anyone takes away from the words of the scroll of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city, which are written in this scroll.

E. The unique revelation of God's New Testament economy and the contents of the full gospel of God—Col. 2:2-9; Eph. 3:3-11; 5:32; Rom. 1:1-14.

Col. 2:2 That their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ,

Col. 2:3 In whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

Col. 2:4 This I say that no one may delude you with persuasive speech.

Col. 2:5 For even though I am absent in the flesh, yet in the spirit I am with you, rejoicing and seeing your order and the solid basis of your faith in Christ.

Col. 2:6 As therefore you have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him,

Col. 2:7 Having been rooted and being built up in Him, and being established in the faith even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Col. 2:8 Beware that no one carries you off as spoil through his philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the

elements of the world, and not according to Christ;

Col. 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Eph. 3:3 That by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief,

Eph. 3:4 By which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ,

Eph. 3:5 Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit,

Eph. 3:6 That in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the Body and fellow partakers of the promise through the gospel,

Eph. 3:7 Of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the operation of His power.

Eph. 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

Eph. 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church,

Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eph. 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

Rom. 1:1 Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Rom. 1:2 Which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,

Rom. 1:3 Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh,

Rom. 1:4 Who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord;

Rom. 1:5 Through whom we have received grace and apostleship unto the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles on behalf of His name,

Rom. 1:6 Among whom you also are the called ones of Jesus Christ;

Rom. 1:7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, the called saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all because your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.

Rom. 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,

Rom. 1:10 Beseeching if by any means now at last I may be prospered in the will

of God to come to you.

Rom. 1:11 For I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift so that you may be established;

Rom. 1:12 That is, that I with you may be encouraged among you through the faith which is in one another, both yours and mine.

Rom. 1:13 And I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that often I purposed to come to you (yet was hindered until the present), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

Rom. 1:14 I am debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to foolish.

II. The apostles' teaching is the church's constitution; the church must hold it and be under it absolutely—Titus 1:9:

Titus 1:9 Holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who oppose.

A. The apostles' teaching is the constitution of the Christian faith—Jude 3; 1 Tim. 1:19; 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7.

Jude 3 Beloved, while using all diligence to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you and exhort you to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

1 Tim. 1:19 Holding faith and a good conscience, concerning which some, thrusting these away, have become shipwrecked regarding the faith;

1 Tim. 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession before many witnesses.

2 Tim. 4:7 I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.

B. The apostles' teaching, as the church's constitution, should be universally taught everywhere in every church in the same way—1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17.

1 Cor. 4:17 Because of this I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Cor. 7:17 However as the Lord has apportioned to each one, as God has called each one, so let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.

C. This constitution, like every constitution, must be properly interpreted.

III. Any teaching that was different from the apostles' teaching was not allowed by the apostles:

A. Any other belief besides this unique faith was not allowed by the apostles—Gal. 1:7-9.

Gal. 1:7 Which is not another gospel, only there are some who trouble you and desire to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Gal. 1:8 But if even we or an angel out of heaven should announce to you a gospel beyond that which we have announced to you, let him be accursed.

Gal. 1:9 As we have said before, now also I say again, If anyone announces to you a gospel beyond that which you have received, let him be accursed.

B. Teachings that went beyond the teaching of Christ were not allowed by the apostles—2 John 7-9.

2 John 7 For many deceivers went out into the world, those who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

2 John 8 Look to yourselves that you do not lose the things which we wrought, but that you may receive a full reward.

2 John 9 Everyone who goes beyond and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

C. The apostle would not allow any different teaching. All teachings different from the unique revelation of God's New Testament economy were considered by the apostles as winds of teaching—1 Tim. 1:3-4; Eph. 4:14.

1 Tim. 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

1 Tim. 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

Eph. 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error.

D. God's holy writing should not be twisted by anyone in any way, but rather unfold them rightly and straightly without distortion—2 Pet. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:15.

2 Pet. 3:16 As also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and

unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

2 Tim. 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth.

IV. The apostles' teaching is for the protection of the church, which is the oneness of the Body of Christ—Acts 2:41-42:

Acts 2:41 Those then who received his word were baptized, and there were added on that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

A. The teaching of the apostles is the very holding factor of the one accord—Acts 2:42a, 46a.

Acts 2:42a And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles.

Acts 2:46a And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple.

B. If we limit ourselves to the apostles' teaching (concerning the teaching of the New Testament economy), we will be kept in oneness and will have one way for one goal.

C. There must be only one unique teaching in the church—the apostles' teaching; there must be also only one unique fellowship which is produced by the apostles' teaching.

D. All other fellowship outside of the apostles' fellowship is divisive; our fellowship must be in the fellowship of the apostles.

V. The church's being blessed is because the church is continuing steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship—Acts 2:42, 46; 6:7.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart.

Acts 6:7 And the word of God grew, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly; and a large number of the priests obeyed the faith.

REFERENCE

Holy Word for Morning Revival—The Crucial Content of God's New Testament Ministry (1), Week 1; Holy Word for Morning Revival—The Crucial Elements of the Lord's Present Move, Week 1; The Apostles' Teaching, Ch. 1; The Apostles' Teaching and the New Testament Leadership, Ch. 1; Elders' Training, Book 4, Ch. 8; Elders' Training, Book 7, Chs. 3, 8; Elders' Training, Book 9, Ch. 4; The God-Ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy, Ch. 17; The Ministry of the New Testament and the Teaching and Fellowship of the Apostles, Ch. 2; Life-Study of Acts, Msgs. 12; Life-Study of First Timothy, Msgs. 8; Life-Study of Titus, Msgs. 1 to 3.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE APOSTLES' TEACHING IS THE ENTIRE SPEAKING OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, IT BEING GOD'S ENTIRE SPEAKING IN THE SON TO HIS NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS

God has spoken, and today God still speaks. There are many matters in God's speaking. Today God speaks to us in the Son (Heb. 1:1-2). God's speaking in the New Testament is in the way of incarnation. The Lord Jesus' speaking was God's speaking in the Son as the man in the four Gospels (John 14:10; 5:24; Matt. 28:19-20).

He also spoke in the Son as the Spirit through the apostles, from Acts to Revelation (John 16:12-15; Rev. 2:1, 7; 1 Cor. 4:17b; 7:17b; 2 Pet. 3:15-16; Rev. 1:1-2). While God was speaking in the Son, one day the Son told His disciples, "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall disclose it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; therefore I said that He receives of Mine and shall disclose it to you" (John 16:12-15)....This means that after the four Gospels, there would be God's further speaking.

In the Acts, in the Epistles, and in Revelation, God spoke further, in the Son as the Spirit through the apostles. The apostles through whom God spoke in the Son as the Spirit were only a few. They were Peter, John, Paul, James, and Jude. Nearly the entire New Testament was uttered by these five persons....Paul was used by the Lord in his speaking to complete the word of God, especially concerning the mystery of the Triune God (Col. 1:24-25)....Paul completed the part of God's speaking that concerns the mystery of the Triune God, but John completed the entire speaking of God. Therefore, at the end of Revelation there is a concluding word which says that no one has the right to add anything to this book or to subtract anything from this book (Rev. 22:18-19)....God's speaking is complete. Thus, when God speaks today, He simply repeats what He has already spoken.

The teaching of the apostles is the entire speaking of God in the New Testament, first in the Son as a man, then in the Son as the Spirit through the apostles. In the New Testament God cannot depart from the principle of incarnation. He must speak through man. In the four Gospels the man was Jesus. In the succeeding twenty-three books, the men were the apostles. Today we are the men. God speaks in the principle of incarnation. (The Apostles' Teaching, p. 4-13)

The entire teaching of the New Testament, the teaching of the apostles, is the unique, divine revelation of God's New Testament economy. This revelation is concerning the mystery of God—Christ (Col. 2:2-3, 9), the mystery of Christ—the church (Eph. 3:3-11), and the great mystery—Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32).

The apostles' teaching, ...is the contents of the full gospel of God (Rom. 1:1-4). The gospel of God mentioned in Romans 1:1-4 is the full gospel of God, comprising not merely a part of the New Testament, but the entire New Testament. (The Apostles' Teaching and the New Testament Leadership, pp. 12-13)

THE APOSTLES' TEACHING IS THE CHURCH'S CONSTITUTION; THE CHURCH MUST HOLD IT

AND BE UNDER IT ABSOLUTELY

In the Old Testament, the law could be considered as the written constitution of God's people. In the New Testament what replaced the law for God's administration among His people? We know that Christ replaced the law, but we are referring to the aspect and sense of replacing the law in God's administration. In the New Testament, the teaching of the apostles replaced the law. Acts 2:42 says, "And they were continuing steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles." Immediately after the three thousand were saved on the day of Pentecost, they began to continue steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles. In the Old Testament kingdom of God, the constitution was the law, and in the New Testament kingdom of God, the constitution is the teaching of the apostles. (Elders' Training, Book 9, p.45.)

Acts 2:42 indicates that all the three thousand who were saved on the day of Pentecost continued in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles....We must continue in these two things—in the teaching of the apostles and in the fellowship of the apostles. If we intend to continue in the fellowship of the apostles, we must first continue in the teaching of the apostles. Teaching must come first; then fellowship follows. (The Apostles' Teaching, p. 8.)

ANY TEACHING THAT WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE APOSTLES' TEACHING WAS NOT ALLOWED BY THE APOSTLES

Any teaching different from [the unique revelation of God's New Testament economy] is not allowed by the apostles (1 Tim. 1:3-4). "Teachings that go beyond and do not abide in the teaching of Christ also are not allowed by the apostles" (translated) (2 John 9-11). The different teachings included things from the Old Testament, yet they were different from God's New Testament economy. Such teachings were not allowed by the apostles (1 Tim. 1:3-4). (The Ministry of the New Testament and the Teaching and Fellowship of the Apostles, p.12-13)

Any other belief besides this unique faith is not allowed by the apostles (Gal. 1:7-9). Galatians 1:8 says, “But if even we or an angel out of heaven should announce to you a gospel beyond that which we have announced to you, let him be accursed.” ...The apostles were very strict in their teaching, that is, in the New Testament teaching, the contents of the full gospel of God.

All teachings different from the unique revelation of God’s New Testament economy were considered by the apostles as winds of teaching (Eph. 4:14)....These winds of teaching are...with a view to inducing men into the satanic system of error....Satan has a system, and if it were possible, he would induce all Christians into it. The goal, the aim, the purpose, of his system is to carry the saints away from the central lane of the divine revelation with the intention of frustrating and even tearing down the building up of the Body of Christ. Some winds of teaching do not appear to be evil. However, the factor of evil is there.

The apostles’ teaching, the New Testament teaching, is very crucial. Whenever we hear something differing from the apostles’ teaching, we should not be bothered or affected. We should simply come back to the apostles’ teaching. However, if we are not able to properly discern a teaching, we should fellowship with certain saints to receive some help. In God’s New Testament economy, there is only one kind of teaching revealed and recognized by God—the teaching of the apostles. We need to continue steadfastly in this teaching (Acts 2:42). (The Apostles’ Teaching and the New Testament Leadership, pp. 13-14, 16)

From Peter’s word in 2 Peter 3:16 we can learn one lesson, that is, that God’s holy writing should not be twisted by anyone in any way. The Bible does need some expounding and some interpretation, but we must be careful when we expound the Word of God not to twist it....but unfold them rightly and straightly without distortion. In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul charged timothy to learn how to cut straight the word of God. In Greek the word for cutting straight is a word used in carpentry. When a carpenter cuts wood, he must cut it straight; otherwise, he will spoil the wood. To unfold the word is to cut the word. This is to expound the word, to interpret the word. We need to unfold the Word

rightly and straightly, not twisting it or distorting it in any way. (The Ministry of the New Testament and the Teaching and Fellowship of the Apostles, p.25)

THE APOSTLES' TEACHING IS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE CHURCH, WHICH IS THE ONENESS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

The matter of one accord controls the entire revelation concerning the Lord's move on one side. If there were no Spirit on the Lord's side, it would be impossible for the Lord to move on this earth at all. In the same principle, without the one accord on our side, God cannot move. We have to match God. He is now the consummated spirit, and we have to say, "Lord, we are ready here as the very one accord. We want to not only render but we are also ready to offer to You this one accord." Immediately there is a kind of marriage, and a couple comes out. Then anything can be done.

If you expect to have one accord in any kind of society, group, or movement, you need the same kind of thinking that comes out of the same kind of knowledge. The Socialist party stresses socialism. Any political party has its own "ism." They stress their "ism" in order to have a party, to have what we call the one accord. Without the one accord, no party could accomplish anything. Any society, group, or movement needs this one accord that comes out of the same kind of thought, the same kind of knowledge. Therefore, Acts tells us that on the one have, there was one accord among the disciples, and on the other hand, all those who were one in one accord were continuing in the teaching of the apostles (2:42). The teaching of the apostles was the very holding factor of the one accord. If there were more than one teaching, this would damage the holding factor. (Elders' Training, Book 7, pp. 110-111)

[In the Lord's recovery we must take the] one way for one goal without different teachings (1 Tim. 1:3-4). We take only the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42) as the healthy words of the Lord Jesus (a Tim. 6:3)... . The one way for the one goal is altogether in the limit, in the sphere, of the apostles' teaching. All the problems, division, and confusion among the Christians today are due to one thing—not caring for the apostles' teaching. Many Christians teach different things from the apostles' teaching. They have not been limited,

restricted, and kept strictly in the sphere of the apostles' teaching. The deciding factor of the one way for one goal is the apostles' teaching. (The Holy Word for Morning Revival—The Crucial Content of God's New Testament Ministry (1), p.13)

THE CHURCH'S BEING BLESSED IS BECAUSE THE CHURCH IS CONTINUING STEADFASTLY IN THE APOSTLES' TEACHING AND FELLOWSHIP

In 2 Timothy 1:15 Paul says, "...all who are in Asia turned away from me." Asia was a province of the Roman Empire in Asia Minor, far away from Rome where Paul, who was in prison, was writing his Epistle to Timothy. When Paul said that all who were in Asia turned away from him, this does not indicate that they turned away from the person of Paul because the person of Paul was far away from them. This verse indicates that they all turned away from Paul's ministry. Among the churches in Asia was the church in Ephesus, which was fully established by Paul's ministry as recorded in Acts 19. They received the gospel, the teaching, the edification, and the establishment from the ministry of the Apostle Paul. But by the time Paul was imprisoned in Rome, they had all turned away from this ministry.

Paul's second Epistle to Timothy was written about A.D. 68. About thirty years later, the Lord used John to continue His divine revelation. The Lord came back to all the churches in Asia who had turned away from Paul. Because they turned away from Paul's ministry, the churches in Asia declined into a situation full of degradation. The degradation of the churches in Asia as recorded in Revelation 2 and 3 was due to their turning away from the proper ministry. This degradation began with their losing of the first love toward the Lord, which transpired at Ephesus (2:4), and ended with the lukewarmness (3:16), the Christlessness. The Lord as the Head of the church is standing outside the degraded church, knocking at her door (3:20).

In these seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3, the striking point of the churches' degradation was three kinds of teachings: the teaching of Balaam, a Gentile prophet (2:14), the teaching of the Nicolaitans to build the hierarchy (2:15), and the teaching of the woman, the so-called prophetess, Jezebel, full

of heresies and fornication (2:20). These three kinds of teaching crept in because they left the teaching of the apostle. Why has Christianity become degraded? Because they turned away from the apostle's teaching. Thus, all the different teachings came in.

In 1 Timothy 1:3 and 6:3 Paul warned not to teach differently. The saints should teach according to Paul's teaching, and the result of this turning away was that they received three kinds of heretical teachings. The teaching of Balaam to worship the idols, the teaching of the Nicolaitans to build up the hierarchy, even the papal system, and the teaching of Jezebel to bring the leaven of evil, heretical, and pagan things into the fine flour of Christ (Matt. 13:33) came in because the proper teaching was rejected. Within thirty years after Paul's final Epistle to Timothy, these churches had reached such a point of degradation. It is dangerous to leave or turn away from the apostle's teaching, from the apostle's proper revelation.

The Lord came in these seven epistles to judge those degraded churches. His eyes were as a flame of fire (1:14) to observe, search, and enlighten, and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword (1:16), which is His discerning, judging, and slaying word (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17). They turned away from the right word, so the Lord came with this word to judge them. The Lord's feet were like shining brass, as having been fired in a furnace (1:15). Brass signifies divine judgment (Exo. 27:1-6). The Lord's coming to the churches in such a way fit in with their turning away from the apostles' teaching and their picking up of different teachings.

One church was unique, and was highly appraised by the Lord—the church in Philadelphia. The Lord highly appraised them and even appreciated them because they kept the word (3:8). That means they did not turn away from the apostles' proper teaching. Although they were weak, the Lord still appraised them highly, telling them that they had a little power and that they had kept the word.

To turn away from the proper teaching is a terrible thing that will result in degradation and in picking up other teachings. I say this as a warning to those dear ones who would not take the new way. To reject the proper revelation, the proper teaching, of the leaders among you is a dangerous thing. You will

open the door for other teachings to come in and suffer degradation. I hope that all of the church people in the recovery would not be followers of those in Asia who turned away from Paul's ministry. Rather, I hope we would follow the pattern of the church in Philadelphia—keeping the Lord's word even though we only have a little strength. Let us keep the word of the Lord, which is to remain in the teachings of the apostle, to remain in the healthy words, to remain in the unique revelation from the Lord with the proper leadership. Then we are safe. (Elders' Training, Book 7, pp. 128-130)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly what is the apostles' teaching.

2. Why did the apostles forbid any teaching which was different from the apostles' teaching?

3. How does the apostles' teaching influence the church?

LESSON SIX

THE MINISTRY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Scripture Reading:

Acts 1:17b …And was allotted his portion of this ministry.

Eph. 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

1 Tim. 1:3-4 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

Hymn: 909

OUTLINE

I. The New Testament ministry being the unique ministry in the universe—Acts 1:17, 25; 2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:12:

Acts 1:17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his portion of this ministry.

Acts 1:25 To take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.

2 Cor. 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart.

1 Tim. 1:12 I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord, that He has counted me faithful, appointing me to the ministry.

A. The New Testament ministry (the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness) versus the Old Testament ministry (the ministry of death and of condemnation)—2 Cor. 3:7-9.

2 Cor. 3:7 Moreover if the ministry of death, engraved in stone in letters, came about in glory, so that the sons of Israel were not able to gaze at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, a glory which was being done away with,

2 Cor. 3:8 How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory?

2 Cor. 3:9 For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.

B. The work of the New Testament ministry is to accomplish God's New Testament economy toward the church for the building up of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem—Eph. 3:9-10; 4:11-12.

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

Eph. 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church.

Eph. 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,

Eph. 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

II. The New Testament ministry being unique but there being many ministers having a portion in this corporate ministry—Acts 20:24; 21:19; 2 Tim. 4:5; Col. 4:17; 2 Cor. 4:1:

Acts 20:24 But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts 21:19 And having greeted them, he related one by one the things which God did among the Gentiles through his ministry.

2 Tim. 4:5 But you, be sober in all things, suffer evil, do the work of an evangelist, fully accomplish your ministry.

Col. 4:17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it.

2 Cor. 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;

A. The unique ministry (work) of the New Testament includes all the work of the apostles, and the apostles are the ministers (the persons) of the New Testament—2 Cor. 3:6.

2 Cor. 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

B. The ministry of the apostles is unique, that is, "the ministry", the

one corporate ministry according to the principle of the Body of Christ.

C. Although the gifted people are many (Eph. 4:11), there is only one ministry: to supply Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ; this is the unique ministry of the New Testament—1 Tim. 1:12.

Eph. 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers.

1 Tim. 1:12 I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord, that He has counted me faithful, appointing me to the ministry.

D. Although there are many ministers, yet there is only one corporate ministry, the New Testament ministry.

III. Division coming from the different teachings of the different ministries:

A. Teaching outside of the unique teaching of God's economy being viewed by the apostles as different teachings—1 Tim. 1:3-4.

1 Tim. 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

1 Tim. 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

B. Different teachings being the main reason for the failure, degradation, and deviation of the church—1 Tim. 1:3-7, 6:3-5, 20-21.

1 Tim. 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

1 Tim. 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

1 Tim. 1:5 But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience and out of unfeigned faith;

1 Tim. 1:6 From which things some, having misaimed, have turned aside to vain talking,

1 Tim. 1:7 Desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither the things that they say, nor concerning what they confidently affirm.

1 Tim. 6:3 If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,

1 Tim. 6:4 He is blinded with pride, understanding nothing, but is diseased with questionings and contentions of words, out of which come envy, strife, slanders, evil suspicions,

1 Tim. 6:5 Perpetual wranglings of men corrupted in mind and deprived of the truth, supposing godliness to be a means of gain.

1 Tim. 6:20 O Timothy, guard the deposit, turning away from profane, vain babblings and oppositions from what is falsely called knowledge,

1 Tim. 6:21 Because of which some, professing this, have misaimed regarding the faith. Grace be with you.

C. Satan organizes and systematizes the divisive teachings, creating serious heresy to destroy the oneness of the practice of the Body life of Christ.

D. All basic elements and sources of division are different ministries. Different ministries produce problems, division, and confusion.

E. Only one type of ministry builds and does not divide, the unique ministry of God's economy, the unique ministry of the New Testament.

IV. The unique goal of the New Testament ministry is to build up the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem:

A. This unique ministry enables the believers to be the same as God in life, nature and expression but not in the Godhead—2 Cor. 3:3, 6; 5:21; 3:18.

2 Cor. 3:3 Since you are being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh.

2 Cor. 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Cor. 5:21 Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

B. This unique ministry incorporates the believers into Christ to accomplish the universal incorporation of divinity and humanity:

1. Believers are established and joined to Christ to experience the anointing, sealing, and foretaste of the Spirit—2 Cor. 1:21-22.

2 Cor. 1:21 But the One who firmly attaches us with you unto Christ and has anointed us is God,

2 Cor. 1:22 He who has also sealed us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

2. Believers are reconciled to God to become the New Jerusalem, the expanded and consummated Holy of Holies—2 Cor. 5:20; Rev. 21:16.

2 Cor. 5:20 On behalf of Christ then we are ambassadors, as God entreats you through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God.

Rev. 21:16 And the city lies square, and its length is as great as the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed to a length of twelve thousand stadia; the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

REFERENCE

The Holy Word for Morning Revival—Crucial Contents of God's New Testament Ministry (1), Week 2; Elders' Training, Book 1, Chs. 1 to 7; The New Testament Ministry and the Teaching and Fellowship of the Apostles, Ch. 1; Crystallization-Study of the Humanity of Christ, Chs. 2, 6.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY
BEING THE UNIQUE MINISTRY IN THE UNIVERSE

There are only two ministries in the entire universe. In 2 Cor. 3, the Old Testament ministry is called "the ministry of death" and "the ministry of condemnation" (v. 7—9). The ministry of the Old Testament only accomplished two things: to condemn man and put man to death. However, in the New Testament and concerning the New Testament ministry, it is the ministry of the Spirit and the ministry of righteousness, which is also called the ministry of justification (v. 8—9).

The work of the New Testament ministry is to accomplish the New Testament economy of God concerning the church (Eph. 3:9-10) and to build up the Body of Christ. Ephesians 4:12 says that the perfecting of the saints is "unto the work of the ministry"; this means that hundreds and thousands of

saints could be perfected for the work of the ministry. Undoubtedly, the term "ministry" refers to the unique ministry of the New Testament to accomplish the eternal purpose of God in the New Testament. God's New Testament includes God's economy. To accomplish the economy requires tremendous work and this work is the ministry. In Ephesians 4:12, the phrase "unto the building up of the Body of Christ" is synonymous with the phrase "unto the work of the ministry". This clearly states that the work of the ministry is for the building up of the Body of Christ. (The New Testament Ministry and the Teaching and Fellowship of the Apostles, pp. 9, 11)

THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY BEING UNIQUE BUT THERE BEING MANY MINISTERS HAVING A PORTION IN THIS CORPORATE MINISTRY

The reality of the [New Testament] ministry, the ministry that fulfilled the figure of the old covenant ministry, did not actually begin with the Lord Jesus, but with John the Baptist. First there was John the Baptist, then the Lord Jesus, then the twelve disciples, and then so many others from Acts to Revelation. In all of these ministers the New Testament bears or unveils only one unique ministry, a ministry to carry out the ministry of Christ to bring forth the church Eventually the unique ministry of God is to carry out the ministry of Christ that the church might be brought into being. Christ and the church is the central subject of the entire Bible. This is the center, the focus, and also the circumference of God's economy. Christ and the church must be everything in God's economy. To carry out this economy, God has only one ministry, a unique ministry. (Elders' Training, pp. 13)

The unique ministry of the New Testament includes all the works of the apostles (corporate ministry), and the apostles are the ministers of the New Testament. Second Cor. 3:6 clearly uses the word "ministers" in plural form, however, in verses 8 and 9, it uses the word "ministry" in singular form. In 2 Cor. 4:1, Paul uses the pronoun "we". He did not say that he (singular) receives the ministry; rather he says that we (plural) receive this ministry (singular). The word "we" not only includes Paul, but also all the New Testament ministers. All this suggests that although there are many

individual ministries, there is only one New Testament ministry.... Ministry is a service, a work, but the ministers are those who serve. There are many serving ones. After the twelve apostles, there were a lot of ministers who entered into the ministry; it includes Paul, Barnabas and many others. Although there are many ministers, but all the ministers have only one ministry.

Paul charged Timothy to fully accomplish his ministry. In [2 Cor. 4:1] Paul spoke of Timothy's ministry, referring to an individual's ministry. This was Timothy's personal ministry, but this personal ministry was a part of the corporate ministry, "this ministry," the unique ministry of the New Testament. The ministry in 2 Corinthians 4:1 is the corporate ministry of all the New Testament ministers. In this corporate ministry Paul had his portion, Peter had his portion, and Timothy had his portion. All the ministers have their own portion of the ministry. When we add all the portions together, we have "this ministry," which is the New Testament ministry. (The New Testament Ministry and the Teaching and Fellowship of the Apostles, pp. 10-11)

DIVISION COMING FROM THE DIFFERENT TEACHINGS OF THE DIFFERENT MINISTRIES

I am burdened to stress this point of the oneness of the ministry because of all the divisions and confusions that have taken place in the past centuries among the Christians. The most damaging thing among the Christians is the divisions and the confusions. Moreover, all the divisions and confusions came out of one source, and that source is the different ministries.

All of us today need to be on the alert. We need to realize that Satan could use any one of us to bring in some other kind of teaching that may be scriptural.

When I speak such words of warning to all the dear saints, I speak them even the more to myself. Many times I have seen something new that had to be considered very carefully in the light of the Lord's up-to-date ministry. I need to consider very carefully whether or not each item is something of God's ministry today. Each point must be measured according to God's basic economy. How to measure every point, how to make a decision about every

item, all depends upon God's basic economy, which is to carry out the ministry of Christ for the producing of the church.

If we keep this one basic principle and one basic factor concerning God's economy, we will be well protected. Nevertheless, each one of us needs to be on the alert not to watch over others but to take care of ourselves that we would not be used by the enemy to bring in different thoughts or different teachings that may seem to be scriptural. (Elders' Training, Book 1, pp. 12-18.)

Nevertheless, all of us need to realize that we are in the Lord's recovery. The first characteristic of the Lord's recovery is oneness. Once we lose the oneness, we are through. If we lose the oneness, we are no longer the Lord's recovery. Therefore, we need to see that there is a peril of different teachings and different opinions damaging the oneness. I thank the Lord for His mercy that since the beginning of His recovery in this country I have never been so cautious in any other matter as I have in this one matter.

In all these twenty-three years it has been my practice to exercise myself never to debate with any of the brothers concerning doctrines or concerning opinions. Six years ago some very serious problems arose among us. During that time, you probably did not hear me say anything concerning these problems because I did not want to give any impression that I was open to debate concerning the opinions and doctrines of others. However, this did not mean that I agreed with those opinions and doctrines.

Now I realize that the more we are going on, the more we are in a trend with a peril that opinions and different teachings may come in. Opinions may be good, and teachings may be scriptural, yet they may be different. Sooner or later, these matters will create a hidden division. The blessing that always comes down from God to His recovery is based upon the oneness (Psalm 133). If we lose the oneness, we will lose the blessing.

I believe that we can learn from Apollos' case that there is the possibility of having different flavors, different atmospheres, and different colors, although we may move together, minister together, work together, and all be together in the Lord's recovery. Apollos was not dissenting with Paul, but his ministry bore a different color and flavor than Paul's ministry. (pp. 29-30.)

If you are burdened to go on in the New Testament ministry of God, you need to go on along this line, in this major, and in this school. I strongly encourage you not to get out of this school, not to get off from this major, and not to get on any other line. Here is a strong major in the unique school for you to explore in your spiritual study. In this line is what the Lord needs, and in this line you will never cause trouble. Your going on in this line will edify the saints, build up the church, and build up the Body to its fullest extent. Furthermore, it will never create any division or any confusion. If you take another way, you will be out of the unique school, off from this major, and not in the line of the New Testament ministry. In that case, whatever you preach, whatever you teach, and whatever you present will be a cause of division. I encourage you to consider this matter soberly.

In the Lord's recovery, if we were to control people merely so that we could present our teaching, that would be foolish, and it would be low or mean. No one can control people except a strong sect. Nearly all of the denominations exercise control over their preachers. For example, if you are going to be a preacher in a certain denomination, it is necessary for you to preach their teaching. Now we need to consider what is the teaching in the Lord's recovery, whether it is Witness Lee's teaching, Watchman Nee's teaching, or some other teaching. It is on this point that I am burdened. We need to be very clear that we do not have anyone's teaching.

We are in the Lord's recovery, and His recovery is to recover His unique ministry. This unique ministry is the ministry of the New Testament, which is to minister the Triune God embodied in Christ as life into His chosen people to make them living members to form the Body of Christ to express Christ as the very embodiment of the Triune God. If we say that we have some kind of teaching, surely this New Testament ministry is our unique teaching, and this ministry should control our preaching and our teaching. We are not controlled by any sectarian denominational teaching, but we should be controlled by this unique New Testament ministry. (pp. 102-103)

THE UNIQUE GOAL OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY—TO BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST

TO CONSUMMATE THE NEW JERUSALEM

The goal of God's economy is for the Triune God to be incorporated with man to be an incorporation. The New Jerusalem is the universal incorporation of God with man. For God to carry out His economy to have this incorporation, a constitution of God and man, man needs to be mingled with God. Without this, the whole universe means nothing. This truth is the unique truth in the whole universe. God needs man to match Him, to be united with Him, to be mingled with Him, to be incorporated into one incorporation with Him. The New Jerusalem will be the consummate incorporation of God and man. In eternity the New Jerusalem will stand to declare to the whole universe that this is God's eternal goal for His expression and for His enlargement.

The sixty-six books of the Bible are very consistent, but to see what the Bible unveils requires light. Apparently all the books are different, but in the unique truth the entire Bible is consistent. The Bible unveils to us that God's economy is to have God and man incorporated into an incorporation. Without man, with whom could God be incorporated? Therefore, there is the need of man. The one Bible reveals to us only one thing. First, God wants to be united with man, to have a union with man. Then God wants to be mingled with man. Consummately, God wants to be incorporated with man to be an incorporation. This enlarged, divine-human, universal incorporation is God's eternal goal, which is the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the ultimate union, mingling, and incorporation of God and man. I hope that we all can see this. (The Crystallization-Study of the Humanity of Christ, p. 20.)

We have seen that the New Jerusalem as the goal of God's economy is the universal incorporation of the consummated God with His regenerated believers. God in His Divine Trinity is an incorporation, mutually coinhering and working together as one (John 14:10-11). Furthermore, Christ is in the Father, we are in Christ, and Christ is in us (v. 20). The conclusion and totality of these three ins is the Spirit of reality, who is Christ Himself, to be the reality within us (v. 17). The Spirit of reality came not only to be with us but also to be in us. Our being in God the Son and God the Son being in us and also in the Father reveal an incorporation. This incorporation is first the

Body of Christ and then the New Jerusalem.... God's economy is to have a Body for Christ which consummates the New Jerusalem—the enlarged, universal incorporation of the consummated God with the regenerated believers. (p. 46)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, explain what is the New Testament ministry.

2. What is the relationship between the New Testament ministry and its ministers?

3. How are divisions produced?

4. What is the unique goal of the New Testament ministry?

LESSON SEVEN

HIGH PEAK OF THE DIVINE REVELATION

Scripture Reading:

Acts 8:30-31 And when Philip ran up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, Do you really know the things that you are reading? And he said, How could I unless someone guides me? And he entreated Philip to come up and sit with him.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 22:17a And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come!

Hymns: What Miracle! What Mystery!

OUTLINE

I. The Lord's vision and revelation having reached the high peak:

A. In the past seventy-three years, from 1922 until the present, the Lord in His recovery has used us to develop the intrinsic understanding of His Word.

B. From 1922 to 1952, Brother Nee laid a very good foundation.

C. From 1952 until today, we have continued to develop what he laid as a foundation.

D. In the past two years (1994), we have reached the ultimate consummation of our development.

II. Crystallization-Study of the Bible:

A. To release high revelation, we need the Crystallization-Study of the Bible.

B. The Crystallization-Study of the Bible, a study which goes even deeper than the life-study of the Bible. The life-study opens the entire Bible to us in a general way, but we still need to enter the depths, to touch the crystals, the intrinsic essence of the Holy

Scriptures.

III. God becoming a man so that man may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead:

A. God becoming a man so that man may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead is the center of the high peaks of the divine revelation.

B. The "diamond" in the "box" of the Bible is the revelation that in Christ God has become man in order that man may become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

C. God became a man so that man may become God in life and nature (but not in the Godhead). This is my unique burden, my only message.

IV. The New Jerusalem—the unique goal of God's economy:

A. Today, in the Lord's Recovery, all the co-workers must learn to speak this high peak of the truth of God's economy—God became man, that man may become God, to consummate the New Jerusalem.

B. The processed and consummated Triune God, according to the good pleasure of His desire and for the highest intention in His economy is building Himself into His chosen people and His chosen people into Himself, that He may have a constitution in Christ as a the mingling of divinity with humanity to be His organism and the Body of Christ, as His eternal expression and the mutual abode for the redeeming God and the redeemed man. The ultimate consummation of this miraculous structure of treasure will be the New Jerusalem for eternity.

V. The universal incorporation of the union and mingling of divinity and humanity:

A. The goal of God's economy is the enlarged, universal, divine-human incorporation of the consummated God with the regenerated believers. The final consummation of this universal incorporation is the New Jerusalem.

B. In our ministry we have used three terms to illustrate the relationship between the believers and the Triune God: union,

mingling, and incorporation.

VI. The organic aspect of God's salvation:

A. Man becomes God—through regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification.

B. The ultimate consummation of God's organic salvation is the New Jerusalem—the processed and consummated Triune God with His regenerated, renewed, sanctified, transformed, conformed, and glorified tripartite man becoming the divine and human universal incorporation.

C. God's judicial redemption as the procedure is purposeless without God's organic salvation. It would be merely for sinners to be redeemed, have their sins forgiven, and become righteous people justified by God, but the purpose is unclear to the majority of believers who mistakenly consider their going to heaven as the purpose of their being redeemed and are unaware that, according to the revelation of the holy Scriptures, God's judicial redemption as the procedure is with God's organic salvation as the purpose, which is to regenerate us, shepherd us, sanctify us dispositionally, renew us, transform us, and build us up into the Body of Christ, which ultimately consummates the New Jerusalem as the ultimate purpose of God's organic salvation to be God's enlargement and expression in eternity.

VII. The three stages of Christ's ministry:

A. The three stages, the three sections, of Christ: incarnation—the stage of Christ in the flesh; inclusion—the stage of Christ becoming the life-giving Spirit; and intensification—the stage of Christ becoming the sevenfold intensified life-giving Spirit.

B. The three sections of Christ's ministry:

1. The first stage is His earthly ministry—from His incarnation to His crucifixion for the accomplishment of His judicial redemption in the flesh.

2. The second stage is His heavenly ministry—from His resurrection to the end of the millennial kingdom for the accomplishment of His organic salvation in the divine and mystical realm.

3. The third stage is His sevenfold intensified heavenly ministry—from the degradation of the church to the complete fulfillment of the New Jerusalem accomplished by His sevenfold intensified Spirit through His sevenfold intensified organic salvation in the mystical realm.

VIII. The divine and mystical realm:

A. It is not "complicated" for the Triune God Himself to be the mystical realm. However, in the divine and mystical realm of the consummated Spirit and the pneumatic Christ, there are many "complicated" matters. These complicated matters are blessings to us.

B. The believers should highly regard that they themselves can enter this realm.

REFERENCE

God-man, Ch. 1; The Governing and Controlling Vision in the Bible, Msg. 1; The Triune God's Revelation and His Move, Msg. 12; Life-Study of Samuel, Ch. 31; The New Revival—Arriving at the Highest Peak of the Divine Revelation, Msgs. 2 and 5; The Application of the Interpretation of the New Jerusalem to the Seeking Believers, Msg. 5; The Issue of Christ Being Glorified by the Father with the Divine Glory, Ch. 5; The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ, Msgs. 1-3; The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life, Msg. 1-3; The Organic Aspect of God's Salvation, Msg. 5; Incarnation, Inclusion, and Intensification, Ch. 2; Secret of God's Organic Salvation "The Spirit Himself with our Spirit", Ch. 6; How to Be a Co-worker and an Elder and How to Fulfill Their Obligations, Msg. 4; The Divine and Mystical Realm, Ch. 3.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE VISION AND REVELATION OF THE LORD REACHING THE HIGH PEAK

For the past nineteen centuries thousands of Bible lovers have studied the Bible. If they were asked what the Bible teaches, they would give many different answers. What I have presented to you in this chapter is the highest standard of what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches only five things: the God-men, the new man, the new creation, the Body of Christ, and the New Jerusalem. The first three—the God-men, the new man, and the new creation—are the factors to bring forth one object of two aspects—the Body of Christ and the New Jerusalem. The God-men, the new man, and the new creation are for the producing of the Body of Christ, which will consummate the New Jerusalem as God's ultimate goal. This is the real and intrinsic understanding of what the Bible teaches.

In the past seventy-three years, from 1922 until [1995], the Lord in His recovery has used us to develop the intrinsic understanding of His Word. In these seventy-three years Brother Watchman Nee's ministry occupied the first thirty years, from 1922 to 1952, the year he was imprisoned. During that period Brother Nee laid a very good foundation. From 1952 until today, a period of forty-three years, we, the co-workers of Brother Nee, have continued to develop what he laid as a foundation. In the past two years we have reached the ultimate consummation of our development. This development consummates in the God-men, the new man, the new creation, the Body of Christ, and the New Jerusalem. This is the conclusion of our seventy-three years of labor on this Holy Book. I believe that nothing could be higher than this. In the past two years I have been occupied with this day and night. To release this high revelation, there is a need to put out the crystallization-study of the holy Word. (The God Man, pp. 22-23)

Crystallization-Study

In this series of messages, I have the burden to crystallize the book of Romans. Romans is a very common and popular book among Christians. I myself have expounded this book in congregations a number of times. Eventually, I had the Life-study on Romans in [1984]. Even though we did this, I still feel some things are hidden there, and these things are the intrinsic essence of God's divine revelation in the Epistle to the Romans. (The Crystallization of the Epistle To The Romans, p. 4)

[1994 Lord] led us to begin the crystallization-study of the Bible, a study which goes even deeper than the life-study of the Bible. Recently, I have been on the crystallization-study of Romans every Wednesday night. ...The life-study opens the entire Bible to us in a general way, but we still need to touch the depths, the crystals, of the holy Scriptures. Although we are acquainted with the book of Romans and I have expounded it several times, there are still many hidden things as the intrinsic essence of the divine revelation. By such a crystallization-study, the Lord can reveal to us the intrinsic essence of the divine revelation, item by item. (The Governing and Controlling Vision in the Bible, p. 13)

GOD BECOMING MAN TO MAKE MAN GOD IN LIFE AND NATURE BUT NOT IN THE GODHEAD

All the saints should be motivated by the Triune God's revelations and visions to join with Him for His move to accomplish His New Testament economy on the earth. Today almost all the countries of this world, except the Muslim countries, have been evangelized. Nearly every place is filled with Christians. Since this is the case, what are our revelation and our vision today? Our revelation and vision have been greatly uplifted in the last three years because we have seen the high peaks of God's revelation. These are mainly concerning God becoming a man so that man may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead. This is the center of the high peaks of the divine revelation among us.

Today our vision is to go tell the high-peak truths to the Christians. This is what we have been doing in Russia for the past few years. We need to enlighten those in Christianity with the high peaks of the divine revelation. There is a hot market for these high peaks today. Wherever we go today, we will be greatly welcomed if we can speak these high peaks. (The Triune God's Revelation and His Move, p. 97)

If we read the Bible without paying attention to this crucial point, then, in a very real sense, the Bible is to us an empty book. This means that although the Bible is real in itself, in our understanding of it the Bible is empty. As an

illustration, let us suppose that a certain box, which is quite attractive, contains a large diamond. A child may be interested in the box but not in the diamond. An adult, however, would focus his attention on the diamond contained in the box. Today, many Christians care for the Bible as the "box," they have not seen and do not appreciate the "diamond" which is the content of this box, and they may even condemn those who have a proper appreciation of the "diamond" in the "box". The "diamond" in the "box" of the Bible is the revelation that in Christ God has become man in order that man may become God in life and in nature (but not in the Godhead).

The vast majority of today's Christians neglect the crucial point in the Bible that in Christ God has become man in order to make man God in life and in nature (but not in the Godhead) and that God desires to mingle Himself with man to be one entity. Some not only neglect this; they falsely accuse as heretical those who teach it. Today many believe one aspect of this crucial point—that God became a man named Jesus—but they do not believe the other aspect—that man is becoming God in life and in nature (but not in the Godhead). (Life-Study of Samuels, p. 204)

Hence, beginning from 1984 I released many messages on the economy of God. Then in the spring of [1994] I continued to go higher. I saw that it is only by God's becoming man to make man God that the Body of Christ can be produced. This point is the high peak of the vision given to us by God.

Actually, early in the fourth century Athanasius, who was present at the Nicene Council, said that "He was made man that we might be made God." At that time he was an unnoticed young theologian. This word of his became a maxim in church history. However, later, gradually people in Christianity not only would not teach this but did not dare to teach this. (The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of The Body of Christ, p. 15)

In the Chinese-speaking conference in February of [1994], ...my burden was to speak about this matter. For twenty-seven years I had not written a new hymn. ...Several days before the Chinese-speaking conference I wrote a new hymn with four stanzas:

1 What miracle! What mystery!

That God and man should blended be!
God became man to make man God,
Untraceable economy!
From His good pleasure, heart's desire,
His highest goal attained will be.
From His good pleasure, heart's desire,
His highest goal attained will be.

2 Flesh He became, the first God-man,
His pleasure that I God may be:
In life and nature I'm God's kind,
Though Godhead's His exclusively.
His attributes my virtues are;
His glorious image shines through me.
His attributes my virtues are;
His glorious image shines through me.

3 No longer I alone that live,
But God together lives with me.
Built with the saints in the Triune God,
His universal house we'll be,
And His organic Body we
For His expression corp'rately.
And His organic Body we
For His expression corp'rately.

4 Jerusalem, the ultimate,
Of visions the totality;
The Triune God, tripartite man—

A loving pair eternally—

As man yet God they coinhere,

A mutual dwelling place to be;

God's glory in humanity

Shines forth in splendor radiantly!

In the two-thousand-year history of Christianity there is not one hymn that is of this category. This is the unique hymn in this category of hymns. This hymn speaks very clearly concerning the high peak of God's vision. (pp. 16-17)

THE NEW JERUSALEM—
THE HIGHEST GOAL OF GOD'S ECONOMY

In ...the Bible [God] shows us ...a great revelation, that is that God wants to make Himself the same as man. ...He is God, yet he took on human nature, put on a human body, and had a human life to dwell and live together with men in order to make men, His chosen people, the same as He is. Thus, although these men are human, they have His divine life and His divine nature. ... He is God and has our human nature; likewise, we are man and also have His divine nature. ... By these two natures and two lives God mingles Himself with man in order that His divine life may be lived out through humanity among men, and in order that His redeemed may have His divinity and in His divinity may live out the likeness of God through the resurrected and uplifted humanity.

Eventually, this will make God and man alike and mingled together and even built together. God builds Himself ...into man and builds man into Himself. ... This is the one new man in the universe. This is what Ephesians 4 shows us. The ultimate consummation of this new man is the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is a constitution of God and man and man and God, who are constituted into one; it is divinity expressed in humanity and humanity glorified in divinity. Therefore, they two—divinity and humanity—become a mutual dwelling place. The One who is God yet man dwells in the one who is man yet God, and the one who is man yet God dwells in the One who is God yet man. They are a mutual dwelling place. Thus, His divine glory shines forth

radiantly with great splendor in humanity. ... This economy is God and man becoming one entity, as one who is God yet man and man yet God. (The Dispensing, Transformation and Building of the Processed Divine Trinity in the Believers, pp. 37-38)

THE UNIVERSAL INCORPORATION OF DIVINE NATURE AND HUMAN NATURE

The Bible actually unveils just one thing—the universal incorporation. The purposeful God has an economy, and in His economy He intends to have a universal incorporation. Deep within Himself, God has the purpose to produce a universal incorporation. Eventually, for eternity in the new heaven and new earth, there will be the New Jerusalem, the unique goal of God in His economy.

Although we have seen that the New Jerusalem is the goal of God's economy, we did not see that the New Jerusalem is an incorporation. In Revelation 21:2 the apostle John says, "I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem," and in the next verse he speaks of the New Jerusalem as "the tabernacle of God." As the tabernacle of God the New Jerusalem is God's dwelling place. We are quite familiar with this aspect of the New Jerusalem; it has become old knowledge to us. Now we need to learn something new and see that as the tabernacle of God the New Jerusalem is the universal incorporation. (The Issue of Christ Being Glorified by the Father With the Divine Glory, pp. 29-30)

Then in [John chapter 14] verse 20 the Lord said that on the day of resurrection the disciples would know that He is in the Father, that they are in Him, and that He is in them. The Son, the person, is in the Father, another person. Then we, the millions of persons, are in the Son, the person. Also, the Son is in us. Union and mingling refer to our relationship with the Lord in our life and nature but not in our person. Humanly speaking, no person can be in another person. But in the divine and mystical realm, the consummated God and the regenerated believers, the persons, indwell one another. This is an incorporation. In this universal, divine-human incorporation, persons indwell one another, that is, they coinhere.

In the whole universe, there are God, man, Satan, and the angels. The angels, including Satan and his fallen ones, are not considered persons. God and man are both corporate persons. God is not just a single person. He is three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—a corporate person. We, the millions of believers, are also a corporate person. These persons are now in one another. This is not a mingling but an incorporation.

The word incorporation also indicates that these persons are incorporated together to carry out their purpose, that is, to carry out God's economy. God's economy is a big career, a big business. In order to carry out His economy, God needs man to be incorporated into Him. Man and God, humanity and divinity, as persons, are incorporated together for the same purpose, for the same goal, to carry out the same career, that is, God's eternal economy. (p. 41)

THE ASPECT OF GOD'S ORGANIC SALVATION

How does God make man God? After God regenerates us with Himself as life, He continues to carry out the work of sanctification, renewing, and transformation in us by His Spirit of life. God became man through incarnation; man becomes God through transformation. When the Lord Jesus lived as a man on this earth, He went up on the mountain and was transfigured. That transfiguration was a sudden occurrence. Our transformation into God, however, is not something that happens unexpectedly. Rather, it is a lifetime transformation until we are conformed to His image. Eventually, we will enter with Him into glory; that is, we will be redeemed in our body. That will be the final step of the redemption of our whole being that brings us into glory. Therefore, it is through regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification that we may become God. When we reach this point, 1 John 3:2 says that when "He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is." (The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of The Body of Christ, p. 31)

[God's complete salvation having the aspect of judicial and organic,] that which is accomplished judicially is the initial step as redemption with five items, that which is carried out organically is a further step as salvation, which is different from redemption and includes eight items. Redemption is

accomplished judicially, whereas salvation is carried out organically. The eight items in the organic aspect issue in the church of God to constitute the Body of Christ which will consummate the New Jerusalem, which is the ultimate goal of God's eternal economy, that is, an organism constituted with the processed triune God and His regenerated, sanctified, transformed, and glorified elect joined and mingled as one to be the enlargement and expression of God in eternity.

Unfortunately, most of the believers through the generations have considered the redemption which God accomplished for us in procedure as the purpose of God's salvation. ... This is a great shortcoming of the majority of believers today in salvation in God's life. As a result, they neglect the pursuing and growing unto full growth in God's life and hardly see anything concerning the building of the Body of Christ, much less the consummation of the ultimate goal of God's eternal economy,, which is the New Jerusalem. Moreover, even concerning the New Jerusalem as the conclusion of the entire Bible, nearly no one knows what it is, yet some consider the New Jerusalem as the heaven where the believers will go after their death. Because of the lack of knowledge concerning the universal oneness of Christ and the unique goal of God's economy, they form different sects and establish their own churches according to the partial truths of their fragmentary seeing, thus resulting in the divided and confused condition of Christianity today. (The Organic Aspect of God's Salvation, pp. 14-15)

THE THREE STAGES OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

I hope that all the co-workers will see the three stages, the three sections, of Christ: incarnation—the stage of Christ in the flesh; inclusion—the stage of Christ as the life-giving Spirit; and intensification—the stage of Christ as the sevenfold intensified life-giving Spirit. These three stages are the three sections of Christ's history. This means that Christ's history is divided into the section of His incarnation, the section of His inclusion, and the section of His intensification.

Therefore we emphasize these three words—incarnation, inclusion, and intensification—and stress the facts that incarnation produces redeemed

people, that inclusion produces the churches, and that intensification produces the overcomers to build up the Body, which consummates in the New Jerusalem as the unique goal of God's economy. This is the revelation in the New Testament. (Incarnation, Inclusion, and Intensification, p. 21)

The New Testament clearly shows us that our Lord became something three times. First, as God, He became flesh; that is, as the infinite God, He became a finite man. Next, as the last Adam, a man in the flesh, He became the life-giving Spirit. Third, as the life-giving Spirit, the pneumatic Christ, He became the seven Spirits. In the New Testament we see that Christ has these three stages. The majority of Christians have seen only one age, the age of the New Testament; they have not seen that within this one age there are three stages. In the first stage He was the Son of Man in the flesh; this is the stage of His incarnation in the four Gospels. In the second stage He is altogether the Spirit; this is the stage of His inclusion from Acts to Jude, the twenty-two books dealing with the life-giving Spirit. In the third stage the life-giving spirit has become the seven Spirits, the sevenfold intensified Spirit; this is the stage of His intensification in Revelation. There are Christ's three "becomings" in His three stages. His becoming is in the stage of His incarnation, His second coming is in the stage of His inclusion, and His third coming is in the stage of His intensification. This is the Testament. (How To Be a Co-worker and an Elder and How to Fulfill Their Obligations, p. 61)

THE DIVINE AND MYSTICAL REALM

We have seen that the Spirit has been consummated and that Christ has become the life-giving Spirit, the pneumatic Christ. Thus, we may now speak of the divine and mystical realm of this consummated Spirit and of this pneumatic Christ. What a marvelous realm this is!

We have pointed out that the three of the Divine Trinity are self-existing, ever-existing, and coinhering, and as such the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are a divine and mystical realm. With the Triune God Himself as a mystical realm there are no "complications," but in the divine and mystical realm of the consummated Spirit and the pneumatic Christ there are a number of "complications," all of which are blessings to us.

God wanted us to be in Him. If He were merely the Triune God without Christ's humanity, death, and resurrection, and we could enter into Him, we would find the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, but nothing of humanity, death, and resurrection. However, when we enter into the divine and mystical realm of the consummated Spirit and the pneumatic Christ, we have not only divinity but also the humanity of Christ, the death of Christ with its effectiveness, and the resurrection of Christ with its repelling power. Everything is here in this wonderful realm. (The Divine and Mystical Realm, p. 40)

The believers must consider highly the entry into this realm, realizing that without Christ becoming the life-giving Spirit, without Christ being the pneumatic Christ, without Christ being the Lord Spirit, and without Christ being the Christ in resurrection and not only in the flesh, there is absolutely no way for the believers to participate in, experience, and enjoy the organic section of God's complete salvation in Christ. (pp. 47-48)

QUESTIONS

1. How did the vision and revelation of the Lord arrive at the high peak?

2. What is the center of the high peak of the divine revelation?

3. How is the New Jerusalem produced?

4. What are the aspects of the God's complete salvation?

5. How does God's complete salvation accomplish the three stages of the full ministry of Christ in the divine and mystical realm?

LESSON EIGHT

THE THREE ASPECTS OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY

Scripture Reading:

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life.

1 John 2:24 As for you, that which you heard from the beginning, let it abide in you. If that which you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

Matt. 19:8 He said to them, Moses, because of your hardness of heart, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so.

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. The meaning of the Lord's recovery:

A. The word recovery means that something was there originally, and then was lost. So there is the need to bring that thing back to its original state—Dan. 1:1-2; Ezra 1:3-11; 6:3-5.

Dan. 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim the king of Judah Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

Dan. 1:2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim the king of Judah into his hand with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

Ezra 1:3 Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him; and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and let him build the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—He is God—who is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:4 And everyone who is left, in whatever place he sojourns, let the men of his place support him with silver and with gold and with goods and with cattle, besides the freewill offering for the house of God, which is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:5 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin and the

priests and the Levites rose up, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred up to go up to build the house of Jehovah, which is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:6 And all those around them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with cattle and with precious things, besides all that was offered willingly.

Ezra 1:7 Also King Cyrus brought out the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought out from Jerusalem and had put in the house of his gods;

Ezra 1:8 And Cyrus the king of Persia had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer and had them enumerated to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

Ezra 1:9 And this was their number: thirty gold dishes, one thousand silver dishes, twenty-nine knives,

Ezra 1:10 Thirty gold bowls, four hundred ten silver bowls of a different kind, and one thousand other vessels.

Ezra 1:11 There were five thousand four hundred vessels of gold and silver in all. Sheshbazzar brought up all of them with those of the captivity who were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Ezra 6:3 In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem: Let the house be built, the place where they offer sacrifices; and let its foundations be raised, its height being sixty cubits, and its width sixty cubits,

Ezra 6:4 With three layers of large stones, and one layer of timber; and let the expenses be given out of the king's house.

Ezra 6:5 And also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple which is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be returned and brought again to the temple which is in Jerusalem, to its place; and you shall put them in the house of God.

B. God is a God with an eternal purpose; nothing can stop Him. So after Satan's destruction, God came in to redo the things that He had done before. This redoing is His recovery. This is to bring back whatever has been lost and destroyed by His enemy, Satan—Gen. 1:2-3; 1 John 1:1; 2:24.

Gen. 1:2 But the earth became waste and emptiness, and darkness was on the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was brooding upon the surface of the waters.

Gen. 1:3 And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life.

1 John 2:24 As for you, that which you heard from the beginning, let it abide in you. If that which you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

C. The church having gone through many centuries of church history, became degraded. The church, therefore, needs to be recovered back to the original intention and standard of God according to the revelation of the Bible—c.f. 2 King 22:8; Ezra 1:3-11; Neh. 2:11, 17; Matt. 16:18; 2 Tim. 2:20; Rev. 18:4.

2 Kings 22:8 Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

Ezra 1:3 Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him; and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and let him build the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—He is God—who is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:4 And everyone who is left, in whatever place he sojourns, let the men of his place support him with silver and with gold and with goods and with cattle, besides the freewill offering for the house of God, which is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:5 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites rose up, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred up to go up to build the house of Jehovah, which is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:6 And all those around them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with cattle and with precious things, besides all that was offered willingly.

Ezra 1:7 Also King Cyrus brought out the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought out from Jerusalem and had put in the house of his gods;

Ezra 1:8 And Cyrus the king of Persia had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer and had them enumerated to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

Ezra 1:9 And this was their number: thirty gold dishes, one thousand silver dishes, twenty-nine knives,

Ezra 1:10 Thirty gold bowls, four hundred ten silver bowls of a different kind, and one thousand other vessels.

Ezra 1:11 There were five thousand four hundred vessels of gold and silver in all. Sheshbazzar brought up all of them with those of the captivity who were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Neh. 2:11 Thus I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.

Neh. 2:17 Then I said to them, You see the bad state we are in, that Jerusalem lies in waste and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build up the

wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.

Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

2 Tim. 2:20 But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor.

Rev. 18:4 And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that you do not participate in her sins and that you do not receive her plagues.

D. The truths as revealed in the Scriptures have been lost, missed, misunderstood, misinterpreted, and wrongly taught throughout the ages. Hence, there is the need of the Lord's recovery—2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 2:18, 25; 3:7.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

1 Tim. 6:5 Perpetual wranglings of men corrupted in mind and deprived of the truth, supposing godliness to be a means of gain.

2 Tim. 2:18 Who concerning the truth have misaimed, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and overthrow the faith of some.

2 Tim. 2:25 In meekness correcting those who oppose, if perhaps God may give them repentance unto the full knowledge of the truth.

2 Tim. 3:7 And are always learning yet never able to come to the full knowledge of the truth.

II. The first aspect of the Lord's recovery—God's revelation:

A. Concerning God's eternal economy—1 Tim. 1:4b; Eph. 1:10a; 3:9.

1 Tim. 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

Eph. 1:10a Unto the economy of the fullness of the times…

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.

B. Concerning the Holy Trinity—John 14:9-20; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5.

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, 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?

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who

abides in Me does His works.

John 14:11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; but if not, believe because of the works themselves.

John 14:12 Truly, truly, I say to you, He who believes into Me, the works which I do he shall do also; and greater than these he shall do because I am going to the Father.

John 14:13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:14 If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

John 14:15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever,

John 14:17 Even 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.

John 14:18 I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.

John 14:19 Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live.

John 14:20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

Rev. 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood.

C. Concerning the person and work of the all-inclusive Christ—Eph. 1:23.

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

D. Concerning the consummated life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; John 7:39; Rev. 22:17.

1 Cor. 15:45b The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

John 7:39 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.

Rev. 22:17 And 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.

E. Concerning the eternal life of God—John 3:15-16.

John 3:15 That every one who believes into Him may have eternal life.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.

F. Concerning the Body of Christ, that is the church of God—Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Cor. 10:32.

Eph. 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

1 Cor. 10:32 Do not become a stumbling block, both to Jews and to Greeks and to the church of God.

G. Concerning the kingdom—Matt. 5:3, 24:46-47; Rev. 2:26-27.

Matt. 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

Matt. 24:46 Blessed is that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.

Matt. 24:47 Truly I say to you that he will set him over all his possessions.

Rev. 2:26 And he who overcomes and he who keeps My works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations;

Rev. 2:27 And he will shepherd them with an iron rod, as vessels of pottery are broken in pieces, as I also have received from My Father.

H. Concerning the New Jerusalem—Rev. 21:2; 22:1-2, 17.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

Rev. 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Rev. 22:17 And 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.

III. The second aspect of the Lord's recovery—the God-man living:

A. A life lived out by the believers who are God-men through

regeneration, not by the life of their old man but by the life of God in the new man—Rom. 6:4-6; Eph. 4:22-24.

Rom. 6:4 We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life.

Rom. 6:5 For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection,

Rom. 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves.

Eph. 4:22 That you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit,

Eph. 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind

Eph. 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.

B. Living Christ to magnify Christ by the power of Christ's resurrection being conformed to Christ's death and through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ—Phil. 3:10; 1:19-21.

Phil. 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

Phil. 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Phil. 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.

Phil. 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

C. Overcoming the self, the flesh, the sin related to the flesh, Satan, and the world—Matt. 16:24; Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14; John 12:31.

Matt. 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Gal. 5:24 But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts.

Rom. 8:3 For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

Heb. 2:14 Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He

might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil.

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.

D. Overcoming religion, culture, including the tide of this age and its entertainment—Gal. 1:4; Rom. 12:2.

Gal. 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

E. Reigning in the reigning life of Christ conquering all the persons, matters, and things contrary to God to become overcomers in this age—Rom. 5:17, 21; Rev. 2 and 3.

Rom. 5:17 For if by the offense of the one death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Rom. 5:21 In order that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rev. 2—3 be omitted

IV. The third aspect of the Lord's recovery—the practice of the church:

A. The universal Body of Christ being the universal house of God, the kingdom of God—Eph. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Matt. 16:18-19.

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

1 Tim. 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

1 Tim. 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Matt. 16:19 I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in the heavens.

B. Being expressed in every city to be the local church of every city; there being one city one church keeping the oneness and not being

divided—Deut. 12:5-18; Acts 8:1; 13:1; Rev. 1:4, 11.

Deut. 12:5 But to the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, to His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go.

Deut. 12:6 And there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices and your tithes and the heave offering of your hand and your vows and your freewill offerings and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock;

Deut. 12:7 And there you shall eat before Jehovah your God, and you and your households shall rejoice in all your undertakings, in which Jehovah your God has blessed you.

Deut. 12:8 You shall not do according to all that we do here today, each man doing all that is right in his own eyes;

Deut. 12:9 For until now you have not come to the rest and to the inheritance that Jehovah your God is giving you.

Deut. 12:10 But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance, and when He gives you rest from all your enemies surrounding you so that you dwell securely;

Deut. 12:11 Then to the place where Jehovah your God will choose to cause His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I am commanding you, your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the heave offering of your hand and all your choice vows which you vow to Jehovah.

Deut. 12:12 And you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God, you and your sons and daughters, and your male servants and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no portion nor inheritance with you.

Deut. 12:13 Be careful that you do not offer up your burnt offerings in every place that you see;

Deut. 12:14 But in the place which Jehovah will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer up your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you.

Deut. 12:15 Yet you may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates, in all that your soul desires, according to the blessing of Jehovah your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat it, as the gazelle and the deer.

Deut. 12:16 However, you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out upon the earth like water.

Deut. 12:17 You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or of your new wine or of your fresh oil, nor the firstborn of your herd or of your flock, or any of your vows which you vow or of your freewill offerings or of

the heave offering of your hand;

Deut. 12:18 But you shall eat them before Jehovah your God in the place which Jehovah your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male servant and female servant, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God in all your undertakings.

Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.

Rev. 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

C. Although the local churches are spread out, they should not be divided because of any reason or matter—1 Cor. 1:10-13.

1 Cor. 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

1 Cor. 1:11 For it has been made clear to me concerning you, my brothers, by those of the household of Chloe, that there are strifes among you.

1 Cor. 1:12 Now I mean this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.

1 Cor. 1:13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?

D. Although the unique church of God is expressed as many local churches, she is still the unique universal Body of Christ; they should not be divided into sects or denominations—1 Cor. 10:16-17.

1 Cor. 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ?

1 Cor. 10:17 Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread.

E. Although there are apostles establishing churches among the churches, elders in the churches to manage the churches, and deacons serving in the churches, there should not be any type of clergy and laity system or hierarchy outside of these holy offices—1 Cor. 9:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:1-13.

1 Cor. 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

1 Cor. 9:2 If to others I am not an apostle, yet surely I am to you; for you in the Lord are the seal of my apostleship.

1 Cor. 9:3 My defense to those who examine me is this.

1 Tim. 3:1 Faithful is the word: If anyone aspires to the overseership, he desires a good work.

1 Tim. 3:2 The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach;

1 Tim. 3:3 Not an excessive drinker; not a striker, but gentle; not contentious; not fond of money;

1 Tim. 3:4 One who manages well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity

1 Tim. 3:5 (But if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the church of God?);

1 Tim. 3:6 Not a new convert, lest being blinded with pride he fall into the judgment suffered by the devil.

1 Tim. 3:7 And he also must have a good testimony from those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

1 Tim. 3:8 Deacons must similarly be grave, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for base gain;

1 Tim. 3:9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

1 Tim. 3:10 And these also must first be proved; then let them minister if they are unreprovable.

1 Tim. 3:11 Women similarly must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

1 Tim. 3:12 Deacons must be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own houses well.

1 Tim. 3:13 For those who have ministered well obtain for themselves a good standing and much boldness in faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

F. Although there are many local churches, they are all taking God's eternal economy as the center to be Christ's unique testimony and not teaching anything not related to God's economy and not part of Christ's testimony—1 Tim. 1:3-4.

1 Tim. 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

1 Tim. 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

G. In this type of local churches, there should be righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit to become the reality of the kingdom of God—Rom. 14:17.

Rom. 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

1. Begetting, nourishing, teaching (perfecting), building.

2. Blending to build up the Body of Christ.

V. The goal of the Lord's recovery:

A. The Lord's recovery is to build up Zion, which is the overcomers, for the building up of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem.

B. The Lord's recovery is God becoming flesh, the flesh becoming the life-giving Spirit, and the life-giving Spirit becoming the sevenfold intensified Spirit to build up the church that becomes the Body of Christ and that consummates the New Jerusalem.

REFERENCE

Concerning the Lord's recovery, Msg. 1; 1993 Blending Conference Messages Concerning the Lord's Recovery and Our Present Need, Msg. 1; The Issue of the Union of the Consummated Spirit of the Triune God and the Regenerated Spirit of the Believers, Msg. 6; The Riches and Fullness of Christ and the Advanced Recovery of the Lord Today, Msgs. 5 and 6; Practical Points Concerning Blending, Msgs. 4 and 5; The Divine and Mystical Realm, Ch. 1; The banners, Messages outlines, and Holy Word for Morning Revival of the Thanksgiving conference in 1997—The Sevenfold-Intensified Ministry of Christ; The first morning Message of the Elders' Training in the Fall of 1999; A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY

After the Lord sent me to the United States, I began the ministry here in December 1962. From that time until the present a little more than thirty years have passed. From the first conference I emphasized the term "the Lord's recovery." I told the dear saints that the Lord sent me to this country for nothing but His recovery.

Although the ministry has continued to stress the matter of the Lord's recovery throughout these years, according to my observation, even some dear saints who have been with us for many years are still not clear concerning what the Lord's recovery is. Because there are many new ones and young ones in the recovery, I feel very burdened concerning this matter. We need to speak about the Lord's recovery, to fellowship about the recovery, and to make transactions among ourselves concerning the Lord's recovery. We are here for the recovery. (1993 Blending Conference Messages, p. 13)

The word recovery means that something was there originally, and then was lost. So there is the need to bring that thing back to its original state. The word recovery is somewhat simple and not too profound, but when we speak of the Lord's recovery we need to apply it to the revelation of the whole Bible. From this point of view the Lord's recovery is a profound and crucial thing. In a sense, the revelation of the entire Bible is a revelation of recovery. (Concerning the Lord's Recovery, p 7)

God is a God with an eternal purpose. He is a purposeful God, and once He has made up His mind to do something, nothing can change His mind, and nothing can stop Him. Apparently, some things may frustrate Him a little, but nothing can stop Him. So after Satan's destruction, God came in to redo the things that He had done before. This redoing is His recovery. This is to bring back whatever has been lost and destroyed by His enemy, Satan. (Concerning the Lord's Recovery, p. 8)

First, the Lord's recovery is the recovery of the divine truths as revealed in the holy Scriptures, the holy Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16)....The truths as

revealed in the Scriptures have been lost, missed, misunderstood, misinterpreted, and wrongly taught throughout the ages. Hence, there is the need of the Lord's recovery. In the age of the early apostles, in the age of the church fathers, in the age of the church councils, in the age of Catholicism with the papal system, and in the age of the Protestant practice, the Lord has always recovered some of the lost, misunderstood, misinterpreted, and wrongly taught truths through some of His saints who loved Him and His holy Word. (1993 Blending Conference Messages, pp. 13-14)

THE FIRST ASPECT OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY— THE REVELATION OF GOD

Simply, the Lord's recovery has three aspects. The first aspect is the revelation of God. The revelation of God is the speaking of God. From Moses in the Old Testament until the apostle John in the New Testament, God spoke for more than fifteen hundred years. His speaking collectively became the completed Bible, which is in our hands today. Hence, the last book of the Bible, Revelation, says at the end that no one should add to these words or take from these words (22:18-19).

Even before the first group of apostles passed away, the church had already veered from the word of God, the revelation of God. This was why the apostles wrote the second Epistles, such as 2 Peter, 2 Timothy, the Epistles of 2 and 3 John, etc. All these second Epistles are books of recovery....After the first group apostles, in church history there were the so-called church fathers, who defended the truths. However, among the church fathers, because of inadequate light, there was always much contention concerning the truths. It was not until A.D. 325 that, for the sake of maintaining the order in his empire, the Roman emperor Constantine the Great came forward to intervene by calling a meeting at Nicaea in order to quiet the contentions among the church fathers....

The Nicene Creed...was not bad in presenting the orthodox and fundamental doctrines concerning God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. It is still used by the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches. Although this creed

is good, in terms of the truth it is still very lacking. Hence, the Nicene Council did not completely solve the problems concerning the truths.

The knowledge concerning the consummated Spirit of the Triune God has been very lacking for centuries....[In nineteen century], when the British Brethren were raised up by the Lord, they pointed out clearly that the Holy Spirit is a person. This was because the word of the Lord Jesus clearly mentioned "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19), and the church fathers long before had acknowledged the Holy Spirit as a person in the Godhead. ...In the twentieth century the Lord's recovery has reached us. Beginning with Brother Nee, we have read through the Bible thoroughly. We have especially dug out all the verses in the Bible concerning the Holy Spirit. Concerning the consummated Spirit, the Lord has shown us three crucial points. Firth, the Spirit of God has been processed to become a life-giving spirit (John 7:39; 1 Cor. 15:45b). Second, this consummated Spirit is the compound Spirit typified by the holy anointing ointment in the Old Testament (Exo. 30:23-25). Third, this Spirit has also become the seven Spirits (Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6), that is, the sevenfold intensified Spirit. These three points were not mentioned in the Nicene Creed....

Today many Christians have never heard of the processed and consummated God. Hence, what they are preaching is the unprocessed God in Genesis chapter one. However, what we have seen is the consummated God in Revelation chapter Twenty-two....The final word of the Bible is the highest authority for defining the truth. The Lord in His recovery has already shown us the highest truth defined by the Bible. (The Issue of the Union of the Consummated Spirit of the Triune God and the Regenerated Spirit of the Believers, pp. 75-77)

THE SECOND ASPECT OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY— THE GOD-MAN LIFE

Now we come to the second aspect of the Lord's recovery, that is, the God-man life, which is the kind of living that the believers need to have. The worldly people emphasize moral and ethical living and religious living; yet these are not what God wants. What God wants is the God-man life, which is

God and man living together. In your family life you should have God living together with you. As a wife, you should have God be the wife with you. As a husband, you should have God be the husband with you. As a co-worker, you should have God be the co-worker with you. Even when you go shopping, you should have God go shopping with you. I have often prayed, "Lord, are You willing to go with me? I have a few words that I want to speak to Brother So-and-so. Lord, will You go with me?" Not living alone but living together with God in this way is the God-man life.

We are not religionists living a religious life. Neither are we followers of Confucius's teachings or Mencius's thoughts, living a moral and ethical life. We are God-men living a God-man life. The Lord's recovery is to recover this kind of God-man life. (p. 81)

THE THIRD ASPECT OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY—THE PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH

The third aspect of the Lord's recovery, that is, the practice of the church. First, the church as the universal Body of Christ is the universal house of God and also the kingdom of God (Eph. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Matt. 16:18-19). These three—the Body of Christ, the house of God, and the kingdom of God—are just one. The Body of Christ is the house of God, and the house of God is the kingdom of God. (p. 84)

In conclusion, the Lord's recovery has not only the revelation of God but also the God-man life; and the God-man life requires a proper practice of the church. I cannot say that in the church everyone is a God-man, an overcomer; but I can say that in the church the opportunity for us to be a God-man is greater, and it is easier to be an overcomer. This is because in the Lord's recovery, every local church is daily nurturing us to be overcomers, to be God-men. I hope that the elders and the co-workers in every locality will create an environment in the church to nurture the saints to be God-men to live an overcoming life. (p. 88)

THE GOAL OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY

The Catholic Church, the Protestant denominations, the Brethren assemblies, the Pentecostal churches, and all the free groups are held back by their imperfect and unscriptural theology from the central revelation of God and come short of the completion of God's eternal economy because of their missing, negligence of, and opposition to the above five critical points concerning the Spirit of God. ...The Lord's recovery today is just the recovery of these critical points concerning the Spirit of God in the move of God's eternal economy. ...If we are asked to explain what the recovery is today, we should be able to answer in one simple sentence: The Lord's recovery is God becoming the flesh, the flesh becoming the life-giving Spirit, and the life-giving Spirit becoming the sevenfold intensified Spirit to build up the church that becomes the Body of Christ and that consummates the New Jerusalem. ...God must have a people who are the God-men to be His overcomers for Him to accomplish His eternal economy concerning the church issuing in the Body of Christ and consummating the New Jerusalem. (The Divine and Mystical Realm, pp. 17-18)

Dear saints, such a mingled living is the reality of the Body of Christ. If among us there is, if not in full at least in part, such a living, the reality of the Body of Christ is among us. This is the high peak of the recovery in the local churches like Mount Zion in the city of Jerusalem. Such a mingling living as the reality of the Body of Christ will consummate ultimately in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth as God's increase and expression for eternity. (The Practical Points concerning Blending, p. 37)

What shall we do in the light of this revelation? There is no other way to reach this high peak except by praying. It is more than evident that Jerusalem is here as a big realm of Christians, but where is Zion, the overcomers? In the book of Revelation what the Lord wants and what the Lord will build up is Zion, the overcomers. The overcomers are the very Zion, where God is. This is the intrinsic reality of the spiritual revelation in the holy Word of God. We have to realize what the Lord's recovery is. The Lord's recovery is to build up Zion. (p. 46)

QUESTIONS

1. Briefly explain the meaning of the Lord's recovery according to the Bible.

2. Please briefly explain the three aspects of the Lord's recovery.

3. What points in the Lord's recovery are concerning God's revelation?

4. How do believers live the God-man life?

5. Briefly explain the practices of the church in the Lord's recovery.

6. What is the goal of the Lord's recovery?

LESSON NINE

ONE ACCORD

Scripture Reading:

Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Phil. 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing.

Rom. 15:6 That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. The one accord being the master key to unlock every blessing in the New Testament:

A. The word in Greek for one accord, homothumadon, is strong in meaning and all-inclusive. Homo means the same and thumos means mind, will, purpose (soul, heart)—Acts 1:14; Matt. 18:19.

Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Matt. 18:19 Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.

B. In Acts, the one accord is the key and the life pulse of prayer, the Spirit, and God's word.

C. The one accord brings in the morale and the impact.

1. Whenever we have the one accord, we will also have the one mouth—Rom. 15:6.

Rom. 15:6 That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Whenever there is no dissenting or different opinion, there is the impact.

II. The genuine one accord in the church being the genuine practice of the oneness in the Body:

A. As we practice the genuine one accord, we must know the church as the unique Body of Christ.

1. One in essence: one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, one God, one faith, one baptism, and one hope—Eph. 4:4-6.

Eph. 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

Eph. 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;

Eph. 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

2. One in doctrine: one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one Church, one recovery, one testimony, and one work—Rev. 1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4.

Rev. 1:2 Who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, even all that he saw.

Rev. 1:9 I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Rev. 12:17 And the dragon became angry with the woman and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.

Rev. 19:10 And I fell before his feet to worship him. And he said to me, Do not do this. I am your fellow slave and a fellow slave of your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of the prophecy.

Rev. 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and of those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

3. One in practice: teaching, practice, thinking, speaking, essence, appearance, and expression—1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 16:1; Acts 2:42; Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3; Eph. 4:13-14; 1 Cor. 11:16; 14:34; Phil. 2:2; 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:6; Rev. 1:11-12.

1 Cor. 4:17 Because of this I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Cor. 7:17 However as the Lord has apportioned to each one, as God has called each one, so let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.

1 Cor. 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, just as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also do.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Rom. 16:17 Now I exhort you, brothers, to mark those who make divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them.

1 Tim. 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

1 Tim. 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

1 Tim. 6:3 If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness.

Eph. 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Eph. 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,

1 Cor. 11:16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we do not have such a custom of being so, neither the churches of God.

1 Cor. 14:34 The women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they should be subject, even as the law also says.

Phil. 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing.

Phil. 4:2 I exhort Euodias, and I exhort Syntyche, to think the same thing in the Lord.

1 Cor. 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

Rom. 15:6 That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

Rev. 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands.

B. As we practice the one accord, we must learn to be in the same one spirit, and to have the same one soul—Phil. 1:27.

Phil. 1:27 Only, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, that whether coming and seeing you or being absent, I may hear of the things concerning you, that you stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together along with the faith of the gospel.

C. As we practice the one accord, we must be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion—1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2; 4:2.

1 Cor. 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

Phil. 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing.

Phil. 4:2 I exhort Euodias, and I exhort Syntyche, to think the same thing in the Lord.

III. The accurate practice of the one accord among the churches:

A. The seven lampstands signify the seven churches. They are uniquely one in their essence, appearance, form, and expression—Rev. 1:12, 20.

Rev. 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands.

Rev. 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

B. The seven epistles in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 is a book written to the seven churches—Rev. 1:4, 11; 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.

Rev. 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

Rev. 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Rev. 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death.

Rev. 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives it.

Rev. 2:29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

C. The apostle Paul taught all the churches the same thing—1 Cor. 4:17, 7:17.

1 Cor. 4:17 Because of this I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Cor. 7:17 However as the Lord has apportioned to each one, as God has called each one, so let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.

D. All the churches are one in their regulation and practice—1 Cor. 11:16; 14:33-34.

1 Cor. 11:16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we do not have such a custom of being so, neither the churches of God.

1 Cor. 14:33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,

1 Cor. 14:34 The women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they should be subject, even as the law also says.

E. The solution made concerning circumcision at Jerusalem was the decree for all the churches to keep, that the churches may be kept in the one accord—Acts 15:1-31.

Acts 15:1 And certain men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

Acts 15:2 And when no little dissension and discussion with them came about through Paul and Barnabas, the brothers directed Paul and Barnabas and certain others among them to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem concerning this question.

Acts 15:3 They therefore, having been sent forward by the church, passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, telling in detail about the turning

of the Gentiles; and they brought great joy to all the brothers.

Acts 15:4 And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared the things that God had done with them.

Acts 15:5 But certain men from the sect of the Pharisees who had believed rose up from among them, saying, It is necessary to circumcise them and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.

Acts 15:6 And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to see about this matter.

Acts 15:7 And when much discussion had taken place, Peter rose up and said to them, Men, brothers, you know that from the early days God chose from among you that through my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Acts 15:8 And God, the Knower of hearts, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit even as also to us;

Acts 15:9 And He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

Acts 15:10 Therefore why are you now testing God by placing a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

Acts 15:11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus we are saved in the same way also as they are.

Acts 15:12 And all the multitude became silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul relating all the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

Acts 15:13 And when they finished speaking, James answered, saying, Men, brothers, listen to me.

Acts 15:14 Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles to take out from them a people for His name.

Acts 15:15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, even as it is written,

Acts 15:16 "After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen; and I will rebuild its ruins and erect it again,

Acts 15:17 So that the remainder of men may seek out the Lord, even all the Gentiles upon whom My name has been called,

Acts 15:18 Says the Lord, who is making these things known from of old."

Acts 15:19 Therefore I judge that we do not harass those from the Gentiles who are turning to God,

Acts 15:20 But that we write to them to abstain from the contaminations of idols and fornication and what is strangled and blood.

Acts 15:21 For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who

proclaim him in the synagogues, he being read every Sabbath.

Acts 15:22 It then seemed good to the apostles and the elders with the whole church to choose men from among them to send to Antioch together with Paul and Barnabas: Judas, who is called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers,

Acts 15:23 Writing to them and sending by their hand the following: The apostles and the elder brothers, to the brothers throughout Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are of the Gentiles, rejoice.

Acts 15:24 Since we have heard that certain ones who went out from among us have troubled you with their words, unsettling your souls, to whom we gave no instruction,

Acts 15:25 It seemed good to us, having become of one accord, to choose men to send to you together with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

Acts 15:26 Men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 15:27 Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will report the same things by word of mouth.

Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

Acts 15:29 To abstain from things that have been sacrificed to idols and blood and things strangled and fornication, from which if you carefully keep yourselves, you will do well. May you be strong.

Acts 15:30 So when they had been sent away, they went down to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they handed them the letter.

Acts 15:31 And when they read it, they rejoiced at the encouragement.

F. The Gentile churches became imitators of the churches in Judea, that all the churches in Christ may be one—1 Thes 2:14.

1 Thes. 2:14 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus, for you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they also from the Jews,

G. All the books of the New Testament constitute one New Testament. It was not only written to the believers of that time but also to all the saints and all the churches generally including all the saints and churches throughout the centuries—1 Cor. 1:2.

1 Cor. 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours.

H. In the churches, the Lord's presence being with the believers and

God's blessing toward the believers are based on their oneness in the Spirit, the one accord among them, and the harmony in their prayer, work, and love—Psa. 133.

Psa. 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell in unity!

Psa. 133:2 It is like the fine oil upon the head That ran down upon the beard, Upon Aaron's beard, That ran down upon the hem of his garments;

Psa. 133:2 It is like the fine oil upon the head That ran down upon the beard, Upon Aaron's beard, That ran down upon the hem of his garments.

IV. "This is my word of love, my word of warning. As those who are taking care of the churches and participating in the recovery, you have to realize the recovery of the genuine church life is altogether, absolutely, wholly, and ultimately one in teaching, in practice, in thinking, in speaking, in essence, in appearance, and in expression." (Elders' Training, Book 7, p. 41)

REFERENCE

Elders' Training, Book 7, Chs. 1, 3; The Law and Grace of God in His Economy, Msg. 4; Life-Study of Ephesians, Msg. 37.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE ONE ACCORD BEING THE MASTER KEY TO UNLOCK EVERY BLESSING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Meaning of One Accord

In Matthew 18:19 the Lord spoke concerning two or three agreeing on something in prayer. The word "agree" in this verse is not as strong as the word "one accord." The word in Greek for one accord, homothumadon, is strong and all-inclusive. Homo means the same and thumos means mind, will, purpose (soul, heart). The Chinese version of the Bible translates this word into a Chinese word meaning the same mind and the same will. In Romans 15:6, the King James Version translates this word into "one mind."

In the book of Acts the one hundred twenty prayed together in one mind, in the same mind, in the same will with the same purpose around and within the soul and the heart. Whenever we pray, we surely should exercise our spirit, but we also should be in the same mind and the same will with the same purpose around and within our soul and heart. This means that our entire being is involved. After the Lord's ascension, the one hundred twenty became the kind of persons who were in one mind, in one will, with one purpose around their soul and heart. For them to be in one accord meant that their entire beings were one. No other book of the Bible uses the word for "one accord" as much as Acts.

The One Accord is the Key and the Life Pulse of Prayer, the Spirit, and God's Word

In Acts the three main factors for the spreading of the gospel as an impact were prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. According to the Bible and according to history these three items are the only way for the gospel to be prevailing. I spent much time to consider whether it is not beyond the teaching of the Scriptures for the church to use a church meeting hall and church personnel to open a school rather than to use our time to contact people one on one with prayer, the Spirit, and the Word, using every inch of the meeting hall in this way for the gospel. I stressed in the past that to use other ways besides prayer, the Word, and the Spirit to promote the gospel are gimmicks.

The one accord is the key and the life pulse of prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. You may pray much, seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and acquire a lot of knowledge from the Word, yet if you are short of the one accord you cannot see the blessing. I saw people who were desperate in praying, in getting the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and in receiving the Word, yet they were dissenting among themselves. There was no one accord.

The One Accord Brings in the Morale and the Impact

From January 1, 1940 to December 31, 1942 I stayed in Chefoo, my hometown in mainland China. During that time, the Lord brought all the saints there into the one accord and there was a real revival with the real

impact. In Shanghai, in Taiwan, and in Elden Hall in Los Angeles, I also saw the effectiveness of the one accord.

In the army the impact is the morale. What is the morale in the army? The one accord. This is why no commander of any army would allow any soldier to bring in any different thought. The soldiers all think the same thing, speak the same thing, stand for the same thing, and live for the same thing. I can testify...that in Chefoo from 1940 through 1942 the morale, the impact, was there. ...The impact was really there.

Recently in Taiwan over one hundred thirty full-timers under our training were sent out. I told them something which I never told people since I came out of mainland China—to cast out demons and heal the sick. We do not promote these things, but when the morale is in us, these things will be among us as an impact. In the Acts are three items—prayer, the Spirit, and the Word, with one key—the one accord. (Elders' Training, Book 7, pp. 11-12)

THE GENUINE ONE ACCORD IN THE CHURCH BEING THE GENUINE PRACTICE OF THE ONENESS IN THE BODY

Essential Oneness

The unique attribute of the Divine Trinity is oneness (John 17:11, 21b, 22b).... This oneness as the attribute of the Divine trinity is called the oneness of the Spirit in the organic Body of Christ (Eph. 4:3-4a). in the organic Body of Christ, the creating of any divisions is an insult to and a contempt for the Triune God, whose attribute is oneness (cf. 1 Cor. 1:13a). (The Law and Grace of God in His Economy, p.71)

The keeping of the oneness is a matter in the Triune God. This means that the triune God Himself is the base of our oneness, its fundamental basis and very foundation. The Originator of our oneness is the Father, the Accomplisher of our oneness is the Lord, and the Executor of our oneness is the Spirit. In our experience, however, the Spirit is first because He is directly related to the oneness, to the carrying out of the oneness in the one Body. Following this, we have the Lord as the Accomplisher and the Father as the

source. Therefore, our oneness is the Triune God realized and experienced by us in our Christian life. (Life-Study of Ephesians, p. 319)

Doctrinal Oneness

There are another seven items concerning our oneness in doctrine: one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one church, one recovery, one testimony, and one work. The first three "ones" are the Triune God. Nearly all of us would agree with the seven aspects of oneness on the doctrinal side. If anyone would have a dissenting spirit, mind, or attitude concerning these seven aspects of the doctrinal oneness, it might be concerning the last one—the work. We may say that the work belongs either to doctrine or to practice. I like to classify the work on the doctrinal side because through my continuous observation I have discovered that few among us would dare to say that they are doing a work separate from the unique work for the Lord's recovery. We all agree with this sevenfold oneness doctrinally concerning the one God, the one Lord, the one Spirit, the one church, the one recovery, and the one work.

Practical Oneness

The Bible tells us we need to be one in teaching, practice, speaking, and even thinking. Some may feel that this is too much and that this is the controlling of people's thinking. They may feel that this is not workable...in such a democratic age....None of us should follow the recovery blindly, foolishly, or ignorantly. We need a sober consideration of the truth in the Bible....(Elders' Training, Book 7, p. 37)

We need to be one in practically are related to the golden lampstands in Revelation 1:11-12. The seven lampstands do not have more than one essence and one substance. The pure gold is the unique substance of the lampstands. Within one substance there can only be one essence. All the lampstands should furthermore be one in appearance....The lampstands all have one substance, which is gold, and they all have one form, one shape.

My burden is to look into the real situation in the Lord's recovery regarding the practices. We have to study this. We are not carrying out the Lord's recovery in a way to blind people's eyes. We are doing our best to open

everyone's eyes. I have been kept in the recovery for over half a century with much consideration and observance. If you believe the Bible, you have to admit that we should be one in teaching, practice, thinking, speaking, essence, appearance, and expression....God not only cares for the essential and substantial reality of the lampstand but also for its shape, its form. It has to be in the shape of a lamp; otherwise, it cannot be called the lampstand. The recovery must have a proper appearance; otherwise, it is not the recovery.

I want to have a thorough fellowship with you concerning what I have seen in the recovery. Many of you can testify that the recovery I brought to the United States was altogether one in teaching, in practice, in thinking, in speaking, in essence, in appearance, and in expression. Although we are not promoting a so-called catholic church, the denotation, connotation, and significance of the word "catholic" is altogether proper. The word catholic, however, was damaged and applied wrongly. We are not promoting anything of that kind of apostate Catholic church, but we are here carrying out the Lord's recovery of the proper church life. According to our over sixty years of study, the proper church life has to be one in teaching, practice, thinking, speaking, essence, appearance, and in expression. You may proclaim that what you stand for is the recovery, but the way of your thinking, speaking, practice, appearance, and expression annuls your declaration. It does not confirm your declaration. The recovery does not bear more than one expression. What do people see, taste, and smell when they come to your locality? (Elders' Training, Book 7, pp. 37-40)

Learning to Be in the Same One Spirit, and to Have the Same One Soul

The one accord revealed in the New Testament is a great matter. This is why Paul indicated to the saints in Rome that they had to take care of being in one accord (Rom. 15:5-6). There were many troubles in the church in Corinth, and the real factor of all these troubles was dissension. Some said that they were of Paul and appreciated him. Others said that they were of Apollos and probably appreciated his way to teach the Bible. Still others appreciated Peter (1 Cor. 1:12). This is disaccord, dissension. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians has more problems in it than any other of his Epistles. There are at least ten

problems in 1 Corinthians which all came out of the same source of disaccord, having different opinions and not speaking the same thing (1 Cor. 1:10).

In Corinthians Paul did not use the word one accord, but he did stress speaking the same thing. For one person to say that he is of Paul and another to say that he is of Apollos indicates that they are not speaking the same thing. We all have to say, "I am of Christ." To say "I am of Paul" or "I am of Apollos" is just like Peter on the mount of transfiguration saying that he would make three tabernacles—one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus. Then a voice came out of the cloud which overshadowed them: "This is My Son, the Beloved. Hear Him! And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them, except Jesus only" (Mark 9:7-8). We all need to speak the same thing. Why should Paul, Apollos, and Cephas be mentioned? This is why Paul asked the Corinthians, "Has Christ been divided?" (1 Cor.1:13). In Paul's second Epistle to the church in Corinth he also charged them to "think the same thing" (2 Cor. 13:11). In his letter to the Philippians Paul likewise charged the saints to think the same thing (2:2; 4:2). (pp. 16-17)

THE ACCURATE PRACTICE OF THE ONE ACCORD AMONG THE CHURCHES

The points listed above [point III] are not my teaching but the teaching of the Bible in the New Testament, the teaching of God's New Testament economy. My fellowship with you all is constituted with four things: 1) a lifelong study of the Bible for over sixty-one years; 2) a lifelong study of the biographies of spiritual giants that the Lord has raised up through all the centuries; 3) the history of the church including the raising up and the founders of different denominations, including the Orthodox church, the Catholic church, the Protestant—the state churches, private churches and the free groups; 4) my observation of the situation in the Lord's recovery, in which I have been for over fifty-four years. (p. 51)

A WORD OF LOVE AND WARNING

The Crucial Need Today—The Recovery of the One Accord

If you are going to do something to follow what the Lord has been doing and is still doing in Taiwan, the first thing you must do is to recover the one accord. Before this is recovered, do not do anything else. Without the one accord you are altogether not qualified to do anything in the Lord's new start of His new move. The Lord's church, His Body, His testimony, has been altogether cut into pieces by the Christians through the centuries not being in one accord. Many know the Lord and know the Bible to some extent, but they would not be in one accord. Where is the one accord? It is hard to see such a thing in Christian history, so the Lord has suffered.

Today we are in the Lord's recovery and especially we are in His new move, His up-to-date move. We must see that the crucial need today is the recovery of this one accord. If this is not among us, we are through.

We must realize that the practices in the Lord's recovery are not matters for others to copy. You must have the life. To do anything you need the life. You have to see what the landmark was of the one hundred twenty in the book of Acts. The landmark that divides the Gospels and the Acts was not the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The landmark was the one accord of the one hundred twenty. If you want to experience the baptism in the Spirit, you must have the one accord. If all the members of a local church have the one accord, the baptism in the Spirit will be there. If you really want to practice the proper way to preach the gospel, you need the one accord. Without this key, no door can be opened. The one accord is the "master key to all the rooms," the master key to every blessing in the New Testament. This is why Paul told Euodias and Syntyche that they needed this one accord (Phil. 4:2). Paul knew that these sisters loved the Lord, but that they had lost the one accord.

What we need is to recover this one accord. If we mean business to go along with the Lord's present day move, we need this one accord. Who is right does not mean anything; we need this one accord. We need to have the same mind and the same will for the same purpose with the same soul and the same heart. Philippians tells us that this matter starts from our spirit (1:27), yet we must realize we are not persons of spirit only. We are persons also of the mind, will, purpose, soul, and heart. For us to be in the same one spirit with the same one soul, one mind, and one will is to have the one accord, which is the key to all

the New Testament blessings and bequests. Otherwise, we will repeat the pitiful history of Christianity by being another group of Christians repeating the same kind of disaccord. (pp. 18-20)

QUESTIONS

1. Why the one accord is the master key to unlock every blessing in the New Testament?

2. What must we know and exercise in order to practice the one accord accurately?

3. Please explain what are the accurate practices of one accord among the churches.

LESSON TEN

BEING CONSTITUTED WITH THE DIVINE TRUTH

Scripture Reading:

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

1 Tim. 4:6 If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed.

Eph. 1:17-18 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, The eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling.

Hymn: #542

OUTLINE

I. Being constituted with the truth, to carry out the New Testament ministry:

A. In order to accomplish the New Testament ministry, to build up the Body of Christ, we need to be constituted with God's New Testament ministry.

B. If we mean business with the Lord, love the Lord, and love His recovery, we must get ourselves constituted with this New Testament ministry.

C. Our constitution should not be something gilded but it must be something inwrought into our being—Rev. 17:4a; Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 4:6.

Rev. 17:4a And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls,…

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

1 Tim. 4:6 If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed.

D. If we want to protect the Lord's Recovery in the genuine oneness and to remain in the central lane of God's eternal economy, we must have an adequate knowledge of the truth.

E. After getting into the New Testament ministry, we must have some proper way to help the saints in the recovery to get solidly educated in this New Testament ministry.

II. The need of the truth to build up the Church:

A. As the house of the living God, the church needs life; as the pillar and base of the truth, the church also needs the solid and living truth—1 Tim. 3:15.

1 Tim. 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

B. The church needs the Spirit but the Spirit is embodied in the word; when we touch the word, we receive the Spirit—John 6:63; Eph. 6:17.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

John 6:17 And they got into a boat and began crossing the sea to Capernaum. And it had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

C. History tells us, in order to help the church to be produced, to survive, and to be built up, we desperately need the living truth.

III. Studying the translated and interpreted divine publications being the best way to learn the divine truth:

A. The Recovery Version of the Bible with its footnotes and the Life-Study messages open up the entire Bible in a general way:

1. The Recovery Version of the Bible and the Life-Study messages has opened up the mine of the Holy Scriptures; we must enter into the open mine to dig out the treasures through much labor.

2. You should not read the Recovery Version and the life-study messages like reading newspapers or reference books but as a textbook.

a. If you merely read the Life-study messages (like reading newspapers), you will only receive a temporary nourishment and the inspiration you receive is like vapor in the air.

b. When what we read becomes a truth in our being through the enlightening of the heavenly light, it becomes our continual and long-term nourishment.

c. The only way for the truth to get into us is through our mentality. If you do not understand the truth, it cannot get into you—Matt. 13:19, 23; Luke 24:45; Eph. 1:18.

Matt. 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand, the evil one comes and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown beside the way.

Matt. 13:23 But the one sown on the good earth, this is he who hears the word and understands, who by all means bears fruit and produces, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.

Luke 24:45 Then He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures.

Eph. 1:18 The eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

B. Enter into the crystallization-study messages, which will lead us into the depth and crystals of the Holy Scriptures, and will reveal to us the intrinsic essence of the divine revelation item by item.

C. Study the messages on the high peak of the divine revelation released between 1994 and 1997, and learn to speak the high peak of the truth according to the new culture and new language in the divine and mystical realm.

IV. The way to be constituted with the truth—PSRP:

A. Pray-read the Holy Scriptures.

B. Study the word with a prayerful spirit, under the shining of the heavenly light, and with the help of the ministry books.

C. Recite the crucial points of the truth according to our understanding of the divine revelation.

D. Prophesy to dispense the divine truth, which has been constituted into our being.

V. The leading ones should lead, encourage, remind, even charge the

saints to seek the truth every day:

A. Try your best to stir up an atmosphere and to create a hunger and thirst in the saints after the Lord's truth.

B. As parents always charge their children to eat proper food, we also should try our best to not only demand but also charge the saints to eat the food of the divine truth in the Holy Scripture properly.

REFERENCE

Elders' Training, Book 3, Chs. 1, 5, 8-12; Elders' Training, Book 5, Ch. 3; The Vital Groups, Msg. 16; How to Be a Co-worker and an Elder and How to Fulfill Their Obligations, Msg. 1; Truth Messages, Ch. 2.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

BEING CONSTITUTED WITH THE TRUTH TO CARRY OUT THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY

Before I came out of mainland China, the New Testament ministry had been thoroughly constituted into my being. I know many doctrines, but I cannot teach those doctrines. My person has become a constitution of the New Testament ministry. Whenever you ask me to speak and wherever you ask me to speak, whether it is at a wedding, at your dining table, to your family, to the old, to the young, to the brothers, or to the sisters, what I can speak and what I will speak is the New Testament ministry. How do we carry out this ministry? We need to be a person constituted with God's New Testament ministry. If you mean business with the Lord and if you love the Lord for His recovery and you love His recovery for the Lord you must get yourself constituted with this New Testament.

Our constitution should not be something gilded. It must be something inwrought into our being. The Great Babylon is gilded with gold (Rev. 17:4), but the lampstand is golden by its intrinsic essence. It is golden intrinsically, basically, and essentially. With many of us, our being golden is somewhat by

gilding. ...The Lord's recovery does not treasure any gilded thing. We treasure the basic things, the intrinsic things, the essential things.

Please do not think that I am encouraging you charging you to learn the Life-studies. ...Merely to learn the messages does not mean much. We must take in the Word and let the Word be organically assimilated into our entire being. Then when you speak and when you give messages in the principle of the teachings conveyed in the Life-study messages, you will not merely speak from the printed page. You will speak out of your "fiber." Then your speaking will stir up much interest and the impact will be there. This is not eloquence. ...Eloquence means nothing. You must become constituted with the New Testament ministry. (Elders' Training, Book 3, pp. 52-53)

The Need of an Adequate Knowledge of the Truth

Because we are short of the adequate knowledge the truth, we are influenced by "good things". An adequate knowledge of the truth can preserve us. Throughout church history, Christendom has picked up many things which are not in accordance with the truth of the divine revelation. Once the adequate knowledge of the truth came in, many of these things were dropped and "mopped away." Up until Luther's time, the Catholic Church had picked up much "dirt" of pagan practices and unscriptural doctrines. Then Luther stood up to put out one basic truth—justification by faith. This truth swept away a lot of dirt. The Catholic Church became "dirty" because of the lack of knowledge of the truth. If I discover any dirt, it is my responsibility to sweep it away with the truth. Many of us have an inadequate knowledge of the Lord's recovery. This means you are short of protection and you miss the safeguard. We must clean up the dirt, not by human doing, but by presenting the truth. Once the saints see the truth, they know where they are, and they know what the Lord's recovery is. (pp. 85-86)

Leading the Saints to Get into the Ministry

After getting into the New Testament ministry, we must have some proper way or the best way to help the saints in the recovery to get solidly educated in this New Testament ministry. I believe that when all the saints in the recovery have received the proper education they will spontaneously become good

ministers to carry such a ministry to the outsiders, to the unbelievers, and to the other Christians who do not meet with us. I feel that it is crucial for us to find out what the way is to help the saints in each local church to get into the same things which we ourselves have gotten into. (p.87)

Today we are here for the Lord's recovery. For the long run, we surely have to help the saints in the Lord's recovery to get into the top spiritual education. You must remember that we still uplift the living Christ, the life-giving Spirit, life itself and its riches, and the church in a living way. To promote these things, to carry these things out, and to bring people into these things so that they remain there, we need the word and we need the truth. The standard of the Lord's recovery depends upon the standard of the truth that we put out. The truths will be the measure and the standard. (pp. 104-105)

THE NEED OF THE TRUTH FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

I say this to show you that even in the past I occasionally indicated strongly that the so-called "Spirit" cannot build up the church, but the solid truth or the solid doctrines can. Certainly, what kind of church you will build up depends upon what kind of truth you teach. Since 1962 here in the United States we have stressed greatly that the churches are built up not by mere doctrines but by Christ, by the Spirit, and by life. ...However, we fully realized that to produce the church, to have the church exist, and to build up the church we needed to put out the solid, living truths full of Christ, full of the Spirit, and full of life. God's way to carry out His economy is to use His holy Word.

Suppose that on this earth among the human race there had never been such a book as the Bible. If we had not had a Bible in our hands during the past 2,000 years since the Lord Jesus resurrected and ascended to the heavens, everything would be in the air and nothing could be solid. Even the things concerning the Spirit could not be solid. The Spirit depends upon the Word. This is why the Lord said that the words that He spoke to us are spirit (John 6:63). The words which the Lord speaks are the solid spirit Without the Word the Spirit is not so solid. Without the Word the Spirit might be just "a

phantom." Today, however, we have the Bible. In innumerable instances we have seen that whenever people contact the holy Word, many times they get the Spirit, but it is hard to give an instance where people touch the Spirit and then they get the Word. There are a great many instances, however, which show us that when you touch the Word you get the Spirit. This is history. A principle has been set up through history that there is the desperate need of the living truth to produce the church, to help the church exist, and to build up the church. (pp. 101-103)

I want to impress you that that the divine Word is what we really need and we should be one with the Word, full of the Word, saturated with the Word, and constituted with the Word. Then when we minister, we minister the Word by the Spirit. We do not minister the Spirit by the Word, but minister the Word by the Spirit. In chapter four of Acts, while the disciples and the apostles were praying, they were filled with the Spirit and began to speak the word with boldness (Acts 4:31). They did not teach or preach the Spirit; the Spirit was only the power for them to preach the word. (p. 39)

STUDYING THE TRANSLATED AND INTERPRETED DIVINE PUBLICATIONS BEING THE BEST WAY TO LEARN THE DIVINE TRUTH

Some of you have considered the Lord's recovery lightly. You never got into the Recovery Version and have never read more than fifty Life-study Messages, though about twelve hundred Life-study Messages been published. ...Some of you have been in the recovery for years and yet you have never gotten into the intrinsic element of the Lord's recovery. We must consider that what Lord has shown us over the years is not that shallow. (Elders' Training, Book 3, p. 97)

Christians today are shallow because they would not pay the price to labor adequately. These riches are all here in the Bible, just like gold in a mine, but nearly no one would labor to dig them out. Just to buy a few pieces of gold is not our job. Our job is to dig the gold mine. We are to do the mining work. This is the Lord's recovery. I hope, brothers, that in your localities you would not repeat the old things. We should learn to go on, to learn the things in the

heavenlies, and to learn to speak these higher and deeper things. (Elders' Training, Book 5, p. 57)

At present, the best way to gain the knowledge of God's New Testament economy is to use the Recovery Version with the notes and the Life-study Messages. Do not think that my intention in saying this is to promote my materials. I am simply telling you honestly what is the best way to be constituted of the New Testament truths. (Elders' Training, Book 3, pp. 135-136)

The Life-studies do not replace the Bible. Rather, they open the Bible, expound the Bible, and release the unsearchable riches in the Bible. (The World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move, p. 26)

I have made an attempt to open every book of the New Testament to you, but I have left the further digging to you. I have only "opened up the mine," and I have not dug that much. Once the mine has been opened and the treasure is exposed, it is easy for someone to dig out the treasures. The intention and the goal of our publishing of Life-study Messages is to open up the mine for you to go in and dig. (Elders' Training, Book 3, pp. 92-93)

Using the Recovery Version with its Footnotes and the Life-Study Messages

In order to get the benefit in full must dive into the Recovery Version with the footnotes the Life-study Messages. It is not an easy task to be built up in the truth. You must study the text and every note. If possible, it is helpful to take care of the cross-references. Then you need to study the Life-study Messages. You need to get into these messages not like you are reading a newspaper or a reference book. You must consider the text of the Recovery Version with the notes and the Life-study Messages as a textbook. ...If you merely read them in a light way, you cannot get into them. You must study them as a textbook.

If you merely read the Life-studies, you will only receive a temporary nourishment. That will only become a kind of inspiration to you. An inspiration is like a vapor in the air. When what we read becomes a truth in our being, this nourishment remains forever. ...What I have received is not all

the time inspiration, like a vapor. What I have received from the Lord is always the solid truth, so it remains in me, nourishing me all the time. You must have the truth. The only way for the truth to get into you is through your mentality. Then it remains in your memory. If you do not understand, the truth cannot get into you. The truth gets into you through your mentality, your understanding. Also, if the truth gets into your memory, it becomes a constant and long term nourishment. Then you have an accumulation of the truth, and you are a person continually under the constant nourishment. You will then know how to present the truth to others, not merely to inspire them or to stir them up, but to make them solid and constituted with the truth. (p. 94)

Heavenly Light Shining on the Written Word

There are a great many facts in the Bible. However, it is not adequate merely to read about these facts. By reading you receive doctrine, information, or news. Along with this, you need the heavenly light to shine upon the facts. When the light shines, the doctrine is immediately changed into truth. In this way, you realize the real thing, the reality. Therefore, to know the truth we first need the facts and then the light that televises the vision of the facts into our being.

The Spirit of reality is the heavenly electricity by which spiritual things are televised into our being. The Bible also says that the Word is truth (John 17:17). All the spiritual facts are contained in the Word and conveyed by it. ...However, without the enlightenment from the divine electricity, these facts are mere doctrines. But when the Spirit shines upon these facts recorded and conveyed in the Bible, they become truth, reality. (Truth Messages, pp. 18-20)

The Outlines, the Notes, and the Cross-references

In our studying of the Recovery Version there are three subsidiary items to the text itself: the outlines, the notes, and the cross-references. The notes are very crucial, but I doubt that many of you realize that some of the outlines are more crucial than the notes. I would not say that the cross-references are crucial. I would only say that they are helpful. First, in reading the Recovery

Version you must learn of the outline. The outline is the first crucial item. (Elders' Training, Book 3, p. 16)

Entering into the Crystallization-Study Messages

Some co-workers and elders often would say to me, "I don't dare to speak about these high truths because the believers whom I am serving cannot understand them according to their present spiritual condition." My reply is: "It is not that they cannot understand, but it is that you cannot speak clearly." It is only after we have known, experienced, and gained Christ that we can speak to others, according to the new language in the Lord's recovery concerning this Christ whom we have gained. We must learn to use the new language to speak the new culture in the divine and mystical realm. Then people will listen to us with great pleasure and will definitely understand the things we speak. It is only by this way that we are qualified to be co-workers and elders. Otherwise, we are outdated in the Lord's move in the present age. (How to Be a Co-worker and an Elder and How to Fulfill Their Obligations, pp. 16-17)

THE WAY TO BE CONSTITUTED WITH THE TRUTH—PSRP

In order to be constituted with the truth, we need to pray-read and then study. Pray-reading verses such as John 1:1 and 14 lays a good foundation. Then we can study the crucial points of these verses with the help of the Life-studies. With this help we can find out what grace and reality are. We have to study the truths word by word, term by term, and phrase by phrase. Spontaneously, we will be able to recite what we have pray-read and studied. We should prophesy with what we can recite; what we can recite is what we have studied; and what we have studied is what we have pray-read. (The Vital Groups, pp. 142-143)

THE LEADING ONES SHOULD LEAD, ENCOURAGE, REMIND, EVEN CHARGE THE SAINTS TO SEEK THE TRUTH

We must do our best to get ourselves into these truths and to get these truths constituted into our being. This cannot be done within a short time, but this must be our practice. I also am burdened that all the leading ones, either

the elders or the serving ones taking some kind of lead, should have a real burden to pray for the saints in your locality that the Lord may stir up their interest, their seeking heart, and their spirit to seek after the Lord in His truth. The truth is nowhere but in the Bible, yet the Bible needs an opener. We need to lead the saints into the real, right, and proper realization of the need of the Bible and also of the help of the Life-study Messages and the Recovery Version.

We should help the saints to build up a practice or a habit that every day they would spend at least thirty minutes in the Word. They should study every day either three times of ten minutes each or one time of thirty minutes. We should charge them to pray-read two or three verses of this book every day....They also need the help of the notes and the Life-study Messages to enter into the truth. The saints need to take this way every day to get into the truth. After one year of studying the Bible in this way, there will be a solid change in the saints' home life, private life, and church life....We may think this is too slow, but even if it took us ten years to finish the entire New Testament that would be wonderful....It is not a matter of quantity but a matter of endurance. You must endure this kind of Bible study. I think we need to remind them week after week, and sometimes the elders need to give the saints some direction, some encouragement, and some incentive. (Elders' Training, Book 3, pp. 108-109)

Many of you leading ones have never encouraged the saints to get into the truths in the way of using the Life-studies. You leave the matter of the saints' getting into the Life-studies altogether up to them. You do not seem to care whether this is a dying matter or a living matter. This way of getting into the truth has become an orphan with no father and no mother, with no fostering. This has been the situation, and in some of the churches, your problems all have been due to this one thing....If your family does not have the diet, be prepared for disease, sickness, and trouble. Do not try to solve the problems by any other way. They will not work. The only way that works is to come back to the proper diet, to feed your family with the proper food.

The church in your locality is your family....You must come back to the proper diet and charge your children to take the proper diet. Do not only ask

them, but charge them. All the mothers in a family charge their little ones to eat properly.

Therefore, as leading brothers try your best in your locality to stir up an atmosphere and to create a hunger and thirst in the saints after the Lord's truth. Tell them that the truth is in the unique holy Word and that the best help to usher them into the Word is the Recovery Version with the notes and all the Life-studies. Of course, we should not practice anything legal. We should not make these things a legal matter that the saints are required to do. However, if the saints do love the Lord's recovery, they must get themselves fed all the time with the healthy food that they may be strong. As a result of eating a proper, regular diet, the saints will be strong and the Lord will have a strong testimony. (Elders' Training, Book 3, pp. 110-111)

QUESTIONS

1. Why do we need to be constituted with the divine truth?
2. How can we be constituted with the divine truth?
3. How should we help others to be constituted with the divine truth?

LESSON ELEVEN

REPENTANCE

Scripture Reading:

Acts 26:20 But declared both to those in Damascus first and in Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea and to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance.

Matt. 3:2 And saying, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. The importance of repentance:

A. The divine requirement of God's New Testament economy—Acts 26:20; 17:30.

Acts 26:20 But declared both to those in Damascus first and in Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea and to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance.

Acts 17:30 Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now charges all men everywhere to repent.

B. Proclaimed as the main item of the proclamation of God's New Testament economy—Luke 24:47-48.

Luke 24:47 And that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Luke 24:48 You are witnesses of these things.

II. The meaning of repentance:

A. The original meaning is to have a change of mind issuing in regret, to have a turn in purpose—Matt. 3:2 notes 1.

Matt. 3:2[1] To repent is to have a change of mind issuing in regret, to have a turn in purpose.

B. To have a change in our mind—our thinking, our philosophy, and our logic.

C. A turn from everything other than God to God and His kingdom—Matt. 3:2; 4:17.

Matt. 3:2 And saying, Repent, for the 2kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.

Matt. 3:22 In John the Baptist's preaching, repentance, as the opening of God's New Testament economy, involved making a turn for the kingdom of the heavens. This indicates that God's New Testament economy is focused on His kingdom. For this we should repent, change our mind, make a turn in our life-pursuit. The goal of our pursing has been other things; now our pursuing must turn toward God and His kingdom.

Matt. 4:17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.

III. The practice of repentance:

A. Repentance is sought by the enlightening of the Holy Spirit—Luke 15:8, 18.

Luke 15:8 Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one silver coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek carefully until she finds it?

Luke 15:18 I will rise up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

B. Repentance is a gift given by the exalted Christ—Acts 5:31.

Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

C. Repentance must be a genuine (real and practical) turn to God—Acts 26:20; 14:15b; 1 Thes. 1:9:

Acts 26:20 But declared both to those in Damascus first and in Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea and to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance.

Acts 14:15 And saying, Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men of like feeling as you, and announce the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and the sea and all things in them.

1 Thes. 1:9 For they themselves report concerning us what kind of entrance we had toward you and how you turned to God from the idols to serve a living and true God.

1. Sins and trespasses.

2. **The world and its corruption, which usurp and corrupt people whom God created for Himself.**
3. **The God-forsaking life in the past.**
4. **The mentality, philosophy, and logic that govern our life.**
5. **The living that is far away from God and in direct opposition to His will.**
6. **All things other than God.**
7. **All things in opposition to God's kingdom and God's divine ruling.**

IV. The result of repentance:

A. Forgiveness of sins—Acts 2:38; Luke 24:47; 3:3.

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 24:47 And that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Luke 3:3 And he came into all the region surrounding the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins.

B. Receiving the divine life of God—Acts 11:18.

Acts 11:18 And when they heard these things, they became silent and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also God has given repentance unto life.

C. Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit—Acts 2:38.

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

D. Receiving the divine inheritance—Acts 26:18.

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.

REFERENCE

The Conclusion of the New Testament, Msg. 119; Truth Lessons, Level 1, Vol. 3, Lesson 29.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE IMPORTANCE OF REPENTANCE

Repentance Being a Divine Requirement of God's New Testament Economy

In God's New Testament economy, God charges all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:20). God overlooked the times of men's ignorance, but now in the New Testament age He charges all men everywhere to repent and turn to Him. For this, God purposely sent John the Baptist to preach repentance (Matt. 3:2), calling people to repent and turn to Him, thus preparing men's hearts to receive His salvation (Luke 1:77). The Lord Jesus, continuing His forerunners teaching, also preached repentance (Matt. 4:17) and brought salvation to the repenting ones (Luke 19:9). On the day of Pentecost, when Peter and the eleven disciples stood up, they also taught and exhorted people to repent and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). When Paul saw the vision of God's New Testament economy, he also exhorted those in Damascus, Jerusalem, and all the country of Judea, and the Gentiles, to repent and turn to God (Acts 26:20). This indicates that in God's New Testament economy, we must repent to God and turn to Him that we may believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15), believe in the Lord Jesus, receive Him as our Savior (Acts 20:21), enjoy God's salvation, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, repentance is a divine requirement of God's New Testament economy.

Repentance Being a Main Item of the Proclamation of God's New Testament Economy

Since repentance is a divine requirement of God's New Testament economy, it is a main item which we must proclaim concerning God's New Testament economy. After His resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus charged His disciples to proclaim the gospel of repentance for the forgiveness of sins in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). Therefore, when we preach the gospel, we should stress this item, telling

people to repent that their sins may be forgiven, that they may obtain the eternal life; and that they may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and the divine inheritance. This is a main item that we should proclaim concerning God's New Testament economy. (Truth Lesson, Level 1, Vol. 3, pp. 53-54)

THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

To Have A Change In Mind, A Turn From Everything Other Than God To God And His Kingdom

The believers have had a change of mind, a turn in their mind from the things other than God to God and His kingdom. In Matthew 3:2 John the Baptist declares, "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near." In Matthew 4:17 the Lord Jesus says the same thing. As used in verses, the word "repent" literally means to think different afterward, that is, to have a change of mind. To repent is to have a change of mind with regret for the past and the future. To repent before God is, on the negative side, to repent not only of sins and wrongdoings but also to of the world and its corruption that usurp and people whom God made for Himself and to repent of our God-forsaking life in the past. On the positive side, to repent is to turn to God in every way and in every thing for fulfilling His purpose in creating mankind. This is a "repentance unto God"; it is to "repent and turn to God" (Acts 20:20). When we repented, we had not only a change mind but also a turn in our mind from everything other than God to God and His kingdom.

To repent is to have a change in our thinking, our philosophy, our logic. The life of fallen man is absolutely according to his thinking. Everything he is and does is according to his mind. Before we were saved, we were directed by our mind. Our mentality, logic, and philosophy governed our life, for we were under the direction of our fallen mind. We were far away from God, and our life was in direct opposition to His will. Under the influence of our fallen mentality, we went farther and farther astray from God. Then one day we heard the preaching of the gospel telling us to repent, to have a change and a turn in our thinking, philosophy, and logic.

According to the New Testament, to repent is to turn not only to God Himself but also to His kingdom. In Matthew 3:2 and 4:17 John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus did not tell people to repent so that they may go to heaven or obtain salvation. They said to repent for the kingdom. The kingdom denotes God's reign, His rule. Before we were saved, we were not under God's rule. However, when we heard the preaching the gospel, we turned to God's kingdom, to God's rule, and now we are in the kingdom of God. We have turned from all things other than God to God and His kingdom, placing ourselves under His ruling so that we may be in His kingdom.

Having Had an Actual Turn from All Things, Bad or Good, To God Himself

When we repented, we had an actual turn from all things, bad or good, to God Himself. This is a turn not only in mind but also in activity, and it is a turn not only from bad things but also from good things. Because good things can be opposed to God, we must turn to Him even from such things. As believers in Christ, we have turned in actuality and in practicality to God Himself from all things.

Three verses that speak of turning to God in actuality are Acts 26:20; 14:15b; and 1 Thessalonians 1:9b. In Acts 26:20 Paul testified that he "declared first to those in Damascus and Jerusalem and all the country of Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance." In Acts 14:15b Paul and Barnabas told the people to "turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all things in them." Here "vain things" refers to idols and idolatry. To repent, therefore, is to turn from idols to the living God, who created all things. The believers at Thessalonica made such a turn and Paul said to them, "You turned to God...to serve a living and true God" (1 Thes. 1:9). To turn to God from idols is not only to turn away from false gods, with the Devil and demons behind them, but also to turn away from all things other than God. This is by faith infused into the new converts through hearing the word of the gospel. To serve a true and living God is to serve the very God who is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit-processed to be the believers' life and life supply for their enjoyment. Having repented, that is, having actually

turned to Him, they should now experience Him not only as the object of worship but also as the all-inclusive One who lives in them. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 1290-1292)

THE PRACTICE OF REPENTANCE

Sought by the Enlightening of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit separates us unto God through seeking us by enlightening us. This enlightening of the Holy Spirit is illustrated by the second parable in Luke 15, the parable of the seeking woman. Luke 15:8 says, "What woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek carefully until she finds it? The lamp signifies the word of God (Psa.119: 105, 180) used by the Spirit to enlighten and expose the sinner's position and condition so that he may repent. The word 'sweep" indicates the searching and cleansing of the inside of a sinner. The Spirit's seeking here is inside the sinner, carried out by the Spirit's working within the repenting sinner.

The Spirit seeks the sinner as a woman seeks carefully one lost coin until she finds it. This means that the Spirit comes to find us out. After the accomplishment of redemption by the Son, the Spirit comes to seek us and find us by enlightening us.

As indicated by the parable of the seeking woman, the Spirit enlightens us inwardly. The Spirit seeks us by enlightening our inner being in a fine, careful way. As the result of the Spirit's enlightening, we are separated to God and we repent. The repentance resulting from the enlightening of the Spirit is an inward matter. Such a subjective work can be done only by the penetrating Spirit, for the Spirit is able to penetrate the depths of our being to enlighten us and expose us. (pp. 1286-1287)

As a Gift Given by the Exalted Christ as a Leader and Savior

Repentance is a gift given by the exalted Christ as a Leader and Savior. "This One God has exalted to His right hand as a Leader and Savior, to give

repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). This clearly reveals that repentance is a gift given to us by the exalted Christ. To give repentance and forgiveness of sins to God's chosen people required Christ to be exalted as a ruling Leader and Savior. His Sovereign ruling causes and leads God's chosen people to repent, and His salvation based upon His redemption affords them forgiveness of sins. Repentance is for forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4). On God's side, forgiveness of sins is based upon His redemption (Eph. 1:7). On man's side, forgiveness of sins is through repentance.

Repentance and forgiveness of sins are major gifts, and only the Lord Jesus as the Leader and the Savior is qualified to give them. No one else is qualified to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to others. (pp. 1293-1294)

THE RESULT OF REPENTANCE

To Receive Forgiveness of Sins

The Lord's gospel causes man to repent and to receive forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47; 3:3; Acts 2:38). In order to give man the grace of forgiveness, God must first give him the heart of repentance (Acts 5:31). Unless a man repents of his sin of being against God and turns to God from within his heart, he will neither believe in the Lord Jesus nor be able to obtain God's forgiving grace. If a man wants to be forgiven, he must repent. He must repent of his dead works (Heb. 6:1) and turn back to God.

To Receive Life

In the Lord's gospel, the purpose for man to be forgiven of his sins is that man may receive His life (Col. 2:13). Therefore, if a man desires to receive the Lord's life, he must repent (Acts 11:18). Man must see that his life is corrupt and that his living, which is outside of God, is evil. Seeing this, he is convicted and he loathes himself. As he repents and turns toward God, he is forgiven of his sins and thus obtains the life of God.

To Receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit and the Divine Inheritance

In the Lord's gospel the purpose for men to receive forgiveness of sins is also that they may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) and the divine inheritance (Acts 26:18). When men repent and turn toward God so that their sins are forgiven, they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and the divine inheritance. The Holy Spirit, who is the processed Triune God becoming the all-inclusive Spirit, is given to men at the time of their repentance to be the all-inclusive blessing of God's full gospel (Gal. 3:14) that they may enjoy all the riches of the Triune God. The divine inheritance is the Triune God Himself with all that He has, all that He has done, and all that He will do for His redeemed people. This Triune God is embodied in the all-inclusive Christ (Col. 2:9) to be the portion of the saints (Col. 1:12). The Holy Spirit, who has been given to the saints, is the foretaste, the pledge, and the guarantee of this divine inheritance (Eph. 1:14), which we are sharing and enjoying today as a foretaste in God's New Testament economy, and will share and enjoy to the uttermost in the coming age and in eternity (1 Pet. 1:4). (Truth Lessons, Level 1, Vol. 3, pp. 51-52)

QUESTIONS

1. Please explain according to the Bible the importance and meaning of repentance.

2. Please speak briefly about your practice and experience of repentance.

3. Have you experienced the result of repentance?

LESSON TWELVE

CONFESSION

Scripture Reading:

1 John 1:7, 9 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin. …If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Prov. 28:13 He who covers his transgressions will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

Hymn: 408

OUTLINE

I. The importance of confessing our sins:

A. Confession will bring you into a recovery of intimate fellowship with the Lord—1 Tim. 1:5.

1 Tim. 1:5 But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience and out of unfeigned faith.

B. Confession of sins is the start of the practice of the vital groups.

C. Confession of sins is the base of serving the Lord.

II. The practice of confessing our sins:

A. The cycle in the spiritual life—1 John 1:7, 9.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1. The eternal life.

2. Fellowship of the eternal life.

3. The divine light.

4. Confession of sins—the blood of Jesus washing us from all our

sins.

B. Confession of sins must be thorough.

III. The two aspects of confession:

A. Confessing to God—Psa. 32:5; Prov. 28:13:

Psa. 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And I did not cover my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to Jehovah. Then You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Prov. 28:13 He who covers his transgressions will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

1. Confessing the sin of individualism and individuality.

2. Confessing all your defects, shortcomings, wrongdoings, mistakes, transgressions, trespasses, outward sins, and inward evils, and asking for the Lord's forgiveness—Acts 2:38, 10:43; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 John 1:9.

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:34 And opening his mouth, Peter said, In truth I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons.

Eph. 1:7 In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace.

Col. 1:14 In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3. Confessing your sinful nature, its defilements, its attachment to the contamination of the world, and its oldness, and asking for the Lord's cleansing with His precious blood.

4. Confessing you dispositional problems and your peculiarity in your character.

5. Denying your self, your habit, and your old way of doing things—Matt. 16:24.

Matt. 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

6. Having no more confidence in yourself and no more trust in your natural ability.

7. Loving all the members of your group with an equal love in the love of God.

8. Condemning all the self-exalting views and dropping all the divisive opinions.

9. Forsaking all self-preferences and disregarding all personal tastes.

B. Confessing to man—Prov. 28:13; James 5:16.

Prov. 28:13 He who covers his transgressions will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The petition of a righteous man avails much in its working.

IV. The result of confession of sins:

A. Receiving God's forgiveness and mercy—1 John 1:9; Psa. 32:5.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psa. 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And I did not cover my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to Jehovah. Then You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

B. Enjoying the joy of life and salvation, the growth in life, and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

C. The spirit being released, revived, and strengthened with vitality.

REFERENCE

Fundamental Truths in the Scriptures, Vol. 2, Lsn. 24; Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 2, Msg. 21; Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, Msgs. 10-11; The Training and Practice of the Vital Groups, Ch. 8.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFESSING OUR SINS

You must have a start by going to the Lord until He enlightens you, until He shines on you. Then you will fully realize where you are and what you are. Spontaneously, you will begin to repent by saying, “Lord, I am dead.” While you are saying you are dead, the Lord will say, “You are dead because you are sinful. You are dead because you are dirty and filthy.” The Lord will shine on you and show you that you are like a person buried under the earth with layer upon layer of dirt. You have to get out of that by making a thorough and detailed confession to the Lord so that you can be forgiven, washed, released to emerge from the depths of your fall. This thorough repentance and thorough confession will bring you an intimate fellowship with the Lord. (The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, p. 87)

I want to see that each of you is fully enlightened by God....If you go to Him again and again, He will shine upon you. He will enlighten you. He will bring you into the light. He will expose you to the uttermost. Then you will repent to the uttermost and even weep before the Lord. You will tell the Lord, “Lord, I am so dirty and sinful. I am rotten and corrupted.” Spontaneously, you will make a thorough confession to the Lord. You may confess to such an extent that you would forget to eat. While you are driving to your office, you may still be repenting to the Lord with tears. I wonder how many of us have passed through this stage. (p. 88)

I say again that you must have a time to go to the Lord. You must go to the Lord again and again until you get enlightenment and are exposed in His light. If you come to Him, He will expose you, and you will repent and confess. Then you will be brought into His intimate fellowship....Only one thing counts—for you to contact the Lord by yourself. To do it with anyone else will be a frustration to you. You must go to Him directly by yourself. (p. 90)

There is the need of a real start among us today. There must be some contact between you and the Lord. When I had times with the Lord on the top of that hill, I had to repent and confess. This brought me into an intimate fellowship with the Lord....You need to stop yourself from all other things. Go to a closed room, to a mountaintop, or to some other place to be with the Lord for a personal time. The only thing that has helped me and that can help you

is to contact the Lord directly. No one can escape from the Lord's presence. He is the source. Go to Him and you will be enlightened. (pp. 91-92)

II. THE PRACTICE OF CONFESSING OUR SINS

A. The Cycle in Our Spiritual Life

When we live in the divine light, we are under its enlightenment, and it exposes, according to God's divine nature and through God's nature in us, all our sins, trespasses, failures, and defects, which contradict His pure light, perfect love, absolute holiness, and excelling righteousness. At such a time we sense in our enlightened conscience the need of the cleansing of the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus, and it cleanses us in our conscience from all sins that our fellowship with God and with one another may be maintained. Our relationship with God is unbreakable, yet our fellowship with Him can be interrupted. The former is of life, whereas the latter is based on our living, though it also is of life. One is unconditional; the other is conditional. Our fellowship, which is conditional, needs to be maintained by the constant cleansing of the Lord's blood.

There is a cycle in our spiritual life, a cycle formed of four crucial things—the eternal life, the fellowship of the eternal life, the divine light, and the blood of Jesus the Son of God. Eternal life issues in its fellowship, the fellowship of eternal life brings in the divine light, and the divine light increases the need for the blood of Jesus the Son of God that we may have more eternal life. The more we have of eternal life, the more of its fellowship it brings to us. The more fellowship of the divine life we enjoy, the more divine light we receive. The more divine light we receive, the more we participate in the cleansing of the blood of Jesus. Such a cycle brings us onward in the growth of the divine life until we reach the maturity of life (The New Testament Recovery Version, 1 John 1:7, note 3, p. 1178)

God is faithful in His word (v. 10) and righteous in the blood of Jesus His Son (v. 7). His word is the word of the truth of the gospel (Eph. 1:13), which tells us that He will forgive us our sins because of Christ (Acts 10:43); and the blood of Christ has fulfilled His righteous requirements that He might forgive us our sins (Matt. 26:28). If we confess our sins, He, according to His word

and based on the redemption through the blood of Jesus, forgives us because He must be faithful in His word and righteous in the blood of Jesus; otherwise, He would be unfaithful and unrighteous. Our confession is needed for His forgiveness. Such forgiveness of God, which is for the restoration of our fellowship with Him, is conditional; it depends on our confession. (The New Testament Recovery Version, 1 John 1:9, note 2, p. 1179)

B. Confession of sins must be thorough

Many people have repented and been saved, but they have never thoroughly confessed their sins before God. Therefore, they do not have much joy of salvation, nor do they have much spiritual hunger, thirst, pursuit or growth. If they want to richly taste the Lord's joy of salvation, they must come before the Lord and thoroughly confess their sins. If they want to cause themselves to have spiritual hunger, thirst, pursuit and growth, they must also come before God and confess their sins one by one. (The Fundamental Truths in the Scriptures, Vol. 2, Lsn. 24)

III. THE TWO ASPECTS OF CONFESSION

A. Confessing to God

There are two aspects of confession: one is confessing our sins to God and the other is confessing our sins to man. To confess our sins to God is to come before God and confess everything we have done that offends God. Any sin we have committed offends God, no matter whether in our eyes the sin is against God or against man. David killed Uriah and usurped his wife. Perhaps to our view, David only sinned against man and offended man. But David said that he had sinned against God and had offended man (see Psalms 51:1-17). Therefore, he confessed that sin to God....When confessing sins to God in this way, we cannot be general; we cannot only confess in principle that we have sinned greatly. We must be specific and specifically confess our sins one by one. We cannot just bring a bag of sins, throw it down before God and forget it. We must open the bag of sins before God and mention each sin. As we have said before, we must open the bag and thoroughly confess each sin one by one.

Confessing the sin of individualism and individuality

We need to confess the sin of individualism and individuality. Individualism is a kind of logic, and individuality is a kind of living. We do have a kind of logic by which we live, and that logic is individualism. This "ism" has become a kind of living, and that living is individuality. We have to pray, may be for more than ten days, to get through on this point.

Confessing all your defects, shortcomings, wrongdoings, mistakes, transgressions, trespasses, outward sins, and inward evils, and asking for the Lord's forgiveness

We need to confess our outward sins and inward evils to the Lord, asking for His forgiveness. We may be able to count out outward sins, but it is hard for us to enumerate our inward evils. Our inward evils are countless. We are the totality of evil. If we are under the Lord's enlightening, we will realize that our thinking, our intention, and our desire are all evil. Our good intentions are not pure. Our motive is not pure. Even our laughing is not pure, but with a hidden motive. We have to be enlightened and dealt with by the Lord to such an extent.

Confessing your sinful nature, its defilements, its attachment to the contamination of the world, and its oldness, and asking for the Lord's cleansing with His precious blood

We also need to confess our sinful nature. Our nature is our very being, and this being is altogether dirty and rotten. It has been corrupted. This nature has its defilements and its attachment to the contamination of the world. The entire world is a contagious ball. If we become attached to it, we are immediately contaminated. We must be dealt with by the Lord to such an extent that we dare not touch anything worldly. To our feeling, to our consideration, the entire world is a big contagious ball.

We also have to deal with the oldness of our sinful nature. Our nature was inherited from Adam, so it is almost six thousand years old. A young person may think that he is only twenty-four years old, but actually he is almost six

thousand years old according to his Adamic nature. This is why the Bible says that we need to be renewed (2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 12:2). We need to be renewed because we are old.

Confessing your dispositional problems and your peculiarity in your character

Then we need to confess our dispositional problems. We have many problems with our disposition. Quite often we take an excuse by saying, "I was born that way." This is the excuse of our dispositional problem. We need to condemn our natural disposition, not excuse it. Many of us pray according to our disposition. For certain brothers and sisters to pray short prayers is very difficult. If some of the saints prayed short prayers of two sentences in the prayer meeting, that would be a "miracle" because this is not according to their disposition. We do not realize how bad we are naturally and dispositionally. We also have the peculiarity in our character. We have to deal with this by thorough and much prayer. We cannot have such a thorough dealing within a short time.

Denying your self, your habit, and your old way of doing things

We also need to deny our self, our habit, and our old way of doing things (Matt. 16:24). There are so many troubles related to us which need to be dealt with. As fallen beings, we are a composition of troubles.

Having no more confidence in yourself and no more trust in your natural ability

Do we believe that today we have no more confidence in ourselves and no more trust in our natural ability? If this trust were taken away from us, we could not live. We live because we have confidence in ourselves and trust in our ability. But if we trust in our ability, we cannot be blended with others. If we have even a little bit of self-confidence, self-trust, we cannot be blended with others.

Loving all the members

with an equal love in the love of God

We need to love all the members...with an equal love in the love of God (Phil. 2:2). It is difficult to find anyone who loves others with an equal love. We always love according to our preference and our taste.

Condemning All the Self-exalting Views and dropping All the Divisive Opinions

We all have some self-exalting views. Some of the saints may feel confident ...whether old or young, has some self-exalting views. Whoever has a self-exalting view surely has opinions. No one is without opinion. We need to condemn all the self-exalting views and drop all the divisive opinions.

Forsaking All Self-preferences and Disregarding All Personal Tastes

The sisters are often stronger in the matter of personal tastes than the brothers. Our self-preferences and personal tastes are a great hindrance to the keeping of the oneness of the Body. (Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, pp. 96-99, 85)

B. Confession To Man

Most of our sins offend people, so we should not only confess our sins to God, we should also confess them to man. We confess our sins to God because every sin we commit offends God. But the sins we commit do not only offend God, they also offend man. If we offend God, He immediately forgives us when we confess our sins to Him. But God cannot forgive us in place of the people we have offended. Therefore, we still must confess our sins to man. For example, you sin and offend your neighbor. God most certainly forgives you, but your neighbor cannot forgive you. You still need to go confess to your neighbor and beg for forgiveness. Otherwise, you will still be condemned before your neighbor and your heart will be in bondage. You need to gain his release and forgiveness, so that you can move freely before him. You simply must confess that sin to him. Therefore, here in Proverbs 28 [v.13] “confess

sins" must also refer to confessing our sins to man. (Fundamental truths in the Scriptures, Vol. 2, Lsn. 24)

IV. THE RESULT OF CONFESSION

Before David confessed that sin to God, he was suffering. But when he did not hide the evil, and confessed it to God, God forgave him and surrounded him with the songs of deliverance causing him to be full of joy. Thus, if we want the joy of salvation, we must confess our sins before God.... Many people have repented and been saved, but they have never thoroughly confessed their sins before God. Therefore, they do not have much joy of salvation, nor do they have much spiritual hunger, thirst, pursuit, or growth. If they want to richly taste the Lord's joy of salvation, they must come before the Lord and thoroughly confess their sins.

Thus, if we want to have the joy of salvation; or to remove the barriers between ourselves and God recovering and maintaining our fellowship with God; or to receive God's mercy and gain His blessing, we must confess our sins to God in each case.

Furthermore, confessing our sins to others can also cause our spirit to be released, thus causing it to be revived, strengthened and enlivened. The spirits of many brothers and sisters are not free and appear to be in a dry, weak and deadened condition because they have offended others and are not willing to confess their sins to man. Sin deadens our spirit. This is especially true of sins that offend others. They cause the conscience in our spirit to have offense before man, so they particularly make our spirit unable to rise up before others and cause it to be deadened and low. Thus, if we want our spirit to be free and strong before others we must confess our sins to man to remove the offense that is on our conscience in the presence of others.

QUESTIONS

1. Why do we need to confess our sins?

2. How should we practice to confess our sins? Please give an example of how you practice confession of sins.

3. Please explain briefly the two aspects of confession of sins.

4. What are the results of confessions of sins?

LESSON THIRTEEN

CONSECRATION

Scripture Reading:

Rom. 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

1 Cor. 6:19b-20a …and you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price….

2 Cor. 5:14-15 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

Hymn: #8330 (How vast, immense, and measureless Consecration—Constrained by the Lord's Love)

OUTLINE

I. The basis of consecration—God's purchase—1 Cor. 6:19b-20a; Rom 14:7-8.

1 Cor. 6:19b And you are not your own.

1 Cor. 6:20a For you have been bought with a price.

Rom. 14:7 For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself;

Rom. 14:8 For whether we live, we live to the Lord, and whether we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore whether we live or we die, we are the Lord's.

II. The motive of consecration—God's love—2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rom 12:1.

2 Cor. 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;

2 Cor. 5:15 And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

Rom. 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

III. The meaning of consecration—to be a sacrifice—Rom. 12:1; Num. 28:2-3.

Num. 28:2 Command the children of Israel and say to them, My offering, My food for My offerings by fire of a satisfying fragrance to Me, you shall be careful to present to Me at its appointed time.

Num. 28:3 And you shall say to them, This is the offering by fire which you shall present to Jehovah: two male lambs a year old without blemish each day as a continual burnt offering.

IV. The purpose of consecration—to work for God.

V. Items to be consecrated:

A. People—Psalms 73:25.

Psa. 73:25 Whom do I have in heaven but You? And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth.

B. Affairs—Phil. 3:8.

Phil. 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ

C. Objects—Phil. 4:18.

Phil. 4:18 But I have received in full all things and abound; I have been filled, receiving from Epaphroditus the things from you, a sweet-smelling savor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

D. Ourselves—Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:19.

Rom. 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

1 Cor. 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

VI. The Result of Consecration:

A. To abandon our future, to be burned to ashes—Lev. 1:9.

Lev. 1:9 But its inward parts and its legs he shall wash with water. Then the priest shall burn the whole on the altar, as a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a satisfying fragrance to Jehovah.

B. For one's own benefit—to be freed from sin, to be enslaved to God, to have fruit unto sanctification, and to live out the overcoming

life—Rom. 6:12-23.

Rom. 6:12 Do not let sin therefore reign in your mortal body so that you obey the body's lusts;

Rom. 6:13 Neither present your members as weapons of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness to God.

Rom. 6:14 For sin will not lord it over you, for you are not under the law but under grace.

Rom. 6:15 What then? Should we sin, because we are not under the law but under grace? Absolutely not!

Rom. 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, his slaves you are whom you obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness?

Rom. 6:17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you have obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which you were delivered.

Rom. 6:18 And having been freed from sin, you were enslaved to righteousness.

Rom. 6:19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification.

Rom. 6:20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with regard to righteousness.

Rom. 6:21 What fruit then did you have at that time? Things of which you are now ashamed, for the end of those things is death.

Rom. 6:22 But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life.

Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

C. For God's benefit—to be well pleasing to God, to prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect, and to accomplish God's eternal purpose—Rom. 12:1-2.

Rom. 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

REFERENCE

The Experience of Life, Vol. 1, Msg. 3; The Overcoming Life, Msg. 11.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE BASIS OF CONSECRATION—GOD'S PURCHASE

The first main point is the basis of consecration. On what basis must we consecrate ourselves to God? On what basis does God require us to consecrate ourselves to Him? We need to have a basis for whatever we do. For example, when we move into a house and live in it, it is because we have paid a price and rented or bought it. This renting or purchasing is the basis upon which we live there. When a creditor takes action to obtain payment of debt from someone, it is because the other party is indebted to him. The debt is the creditor's basis for seeking payment. Our God is one who is most legal and one who acts most reasonably. All His doings are legal and have a basis. He cannot obtain something in the universe without paying a price, and He also cannot demand something from us without a basis. When God, therefore, demands that we consecrate ourselves to Him, it cannot be without a basis. In this matter, He has a very solid basis, that is, His purchase. He has already bought us. He can, therefore, demand that we consecrate ourselves to Him.

1 Corinthians 6:20 says: "Ye were bought with a price." Our consecration is based on this purchase of God. For instance, you may go to the Gospel Bookroom and see a great number of books on display, but you cannot help yourself to any of them, because you have no basis for doing so. But if you pay three dollars for one of the volumes, then you can demand that the book be turned over to you and claim that it belongs to you. This demanding is based upon your purchase. The basis of consecration is exactly the same. How can God demand that we consecrate ourselves to Him? The reason is that He has bought us. Some think that the reason for consecrating ourselves to God is because God has created us. This is not right. Consecration is not based on God's creation; it is based on God's purchase. In Exodus 13:2 we see that after the passover, God commanded the Israelites, saying, "Sanctify unto me all the

first-born." The reason for this command is that all these first-born were redeemed by God through the death of the lamb. They were bought by God with the blood of the lamb. To purchase is to acquire the right of ownership. When God has bought us, He then has the right of ownership, that is, He has a basis to demand that we turn ourselves over to Him to belong to Him. The basis of consecration, therefore, is God's purchase. (The Experience of Life, pp. 27-28)

THE MOTIVE OF CONSECRATION—GOD'S LOVE

The motive of consecration is the love of God. Whenever the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, we will naturally be willing to become the prisoners of love and consecrate ourselves to God. This kind of consecration, motivated by the love of God, is mentioned very clearly in two places in the Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and Romans 12:1.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says: "For the love of Christ constrains us (constrains in the original has the meaning of the rushing of waters) ...and He died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." In other words, these verses tell us that the dying love of Christ is like the rushing of great waters toward us, impelling us to consecrate ourselves to God and to live for Him beyond our own control.

Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice." The mercies referred to here are the love of God. Therefore, in this place also, Paul is seeking to move our hearts with the love of God. He would cause us to have the motive of love, so that we might consecrate ourselves willingly to God as a living sacrifice. We see from these two passages that the love of God is the motive of consecration.

In a normal consecration this motive of love is very necessary. If our consecration rests solely on the basis of consecration, the realization of God's right to us, this consecration will only be based on reason; it will lack sweetness and intensity. But if our consecration has love as its motive, if our feelings have been touched by the love of God, the constraint of this love will cause us to consecrate ourselves willingly to God. This consecration will then be sweet and intense. (pp. 32-33)

THE MEANING OF CONSECRATION— TO BE A SACRIFICE

When one sees the basis of consecration and also has the motive of consecration, he is willing to consecrate himself to God. What then is consecration? What is the meaning of consecration? Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, my the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice." This verse shows us that the meaning of consecration is to be a "sacrifice."

What does the phrase "to be a sacrifice" mean? What is a sacrifice? The Scripture shows us that whenever a thing is set apart from its original position and usage and is laid on God's altar, specifically for Him, this thing is then a sacrifice. In the Old Testament men offered bullocks and rams as sacrifices. The principle is this: The bullock originally lived in a corral and was used for plowing the field and drawing carts. Now it is taken out from the corral and brought beside the altar. There is a change in its position. Then it is killed, placed on the altar, and consumed by fire to be a sweet smelling savor unto God. This is a change in its usage. Thus, this bullock becomes a sacrifice. A sacrifice, therefore, is none other than a thing which is set apart for God and laid on the altar, with a change in position and a change in usage. Whether it is a bullock or a ram, whether it is fine flour or oil, once it is offered as a sacrifice, it leaves the hands of the offerer and can no longer be used for his own advantage and enjoyment. All the sacrifices on the altar belong to God and are for His use and enjoyment. To put it simply, to be a sacrifice means to be offered to God for His use. (pp. 35-36)

THE PURPOSE OF CONSECRATION— TO WORK FOR GOD

Since the meaning of consecration is to become a sacrifice, the thing offered is something which is entirely for God. The purpose of consecration, therefore, is to be used by God, to work for God. But in order that we may work for God, we must first let God work. Only those who have first let God work can work for God. We can only work for God to the extent that we allow God to work. If we do not let God work first, our labor can neither please Him nor be

accepted by Him, no matter how diligent and enduring we are. Those things we do for God which are pleasing and acceptable to Him can never go beyond that which we allow God to work. “Let” is the basis, and “for” is the result. When we have the basis of “let,” then we can have the result of “for.” This is an unchanging principle. Therefore, when we consecrate ourselves to God, although it is to work for God, yet from our standpoint the emphasis is to let God work. The purpose of consecration then is to let God work in order that we might reach the stage of working for God. (pp. 37-38)

ITEMS TO BE CONSECRATED

People

The first thing we should consecrate is the people we love. If a man does not love the Lord more than his parents, wife, children, and friends, he is not worthy to be the Lord’s disciple. If you have consecrated yourself to the Lord, there should be no one in this world that can occupy your heart and nothing that can capture your heart any longer. God saves you in order to gain you wholly. Many tears pull you back. Many human sentiments bid you to return to them. Many heartbreaks persuade you to turn back. You have to say, “Lord, all my relationships with men are on the altar. My relationship with the whole world is over.” ...Even if the Lord has given someone to you, He will not allow you to be attached to him or her. He will not allow you to be attached to your wife, your children, or your friends. Even the Isaac that God promised had to be put on the altar. Many Christians have failed because their hearts are captured by people.

Affairs

We have to consecrate not only people but also affairs. We often make up our mind to do many things and are determined to accomplish them. But we have not sought after God’s will in these affairs. A brother was determined to make the top grade on his graduation examination and to rank at the top in his college class. All of his time and energy were spent on his studies. After he entered the overcoming experience, he committed this matter to God. From that time on, he was willing to follow God even if it meant coming in last on

his examination....Therefore, brothers and sisters, we all should consecrate our affairs to the Lord. I am not saying that all of us have to give ourselves to be preachers. I am saying that all of us have to consecrate everything to the Lord. What is consecration? What does it mean to offer ourselves up? It is to declare, "Lord, I will do Your will." Many people think that consecration is offering up oneself to be a preacher. No, we consecrate ourselves to do God's will. Many people realize through a genuine consecration that they should be faithful in their business and supply the need of God's work. As a result, they give up their preaching work. Many others are motivated by the present needs and the needs in frontier lands to devote themselves to the preaching work. During the past few years, we have been short of co-workers. If God is to work among us, many brothers and sisters will give themselves to serve the Lord full-time in the near future. They will find that they must consecrate all of their affairs to the Lord.

Objects

We have to consecrate not only people and affairs but also all objects. There are people who have to consecrate their jewelry. Others may have houses or clothing they have to consecrate. Some may have only a very small thing to consecrate, but they cannot allow this small thing to become a hindrance to them. Some may be holding back a few gold rings or some pearl ornaments. There is nothing legal about this, but if we want to live a consecrated life, gold ornaments probably have to go, fashionable clothes have to go, and perhaps our money has to go. Many people have been squandering their money and are not pleasing the Lord. Many others have been saving their money and likewise are not pleasing the Lord. Squandering has no place in the eyes of the Lord, just as saving has no place in His eyes. We should not spend our money all at once; we should transfer it to the Lord's account. In the New Testament, nothing is said about tithing a tenth of what we have; the only thing that is spoken of is putting everything in the Lord's hands. The first day we take home our wages, we should tell the Lord, "God, all of this money is Yours. Give me back what I need for my household expenses." It is not a question of using a certain amount and then saving the rest for God. I dare not say that God will or will not take all you have at times. But I would say that if we have

truly consecrated everything to God, what is consecrated belongs to God. ...Many young brothers and sisters can consecrate what they have when they do not have that much. When they become richer, their offerings become less. If the Lord gains our heart, He should gain our wallet as well. If the heart closes up, it means that the wallet is closed up. If the wallet is not open, the heart can never be opened.

Ourselves

We should consecrate people, affairs, and objects, but the last thing we should consecrate is ourselves. We have to consecrate ourselves of God. We should say, "God, I consecrate myself to You to do Your will." Brothers and sisters, we do not know what lies ahead of us. But we know that God has a will for every one of us. It may not be blessings, and it may not be sufferings. But we have to consecrate ourselves to His will. We should be willing to accept His will, whether it comes with blessing or suffering. Many people are willing to be used by God; they are filled with the Spirit and live the overcoming life continuously because they have consecrated themselves to the Lord.

What kind of consecration is this? It is a consecration in which we present our bodies as a living sacrifice. The Bible never speaks of the consecration of the heart; it only speaks of the consecration of the body. No one who has consecrated himself can leave his body unconsecrated. We have consecrated our whole being to the Lord. Henceforth, our mouth is not our own. Our ears are not our own, and our eyes, hands, feet, and even bodies are not our own. From now on we are merely the Lord's managers. From now on our feet are the Lord's, and we cannot use them for ourselves any longer.

Today we should not only consecrate people, affairs, and objects to the Lord but also consecrate ourselves to Him. Every Lord's Day when we put the money into the offering box. We should put ourselves into it as well. When we hold ourselves back, God does not want our money. God will not have "ours" unless He first has "us." God must have us first before He will have ours. There are many people who will consecrate themselves to the Lord, and the Lord will not necessarily ask them to be preachers. He may want some to be good businessmen. Every corner in this world needs light, and we cannot

choose our own work. We should say to the Lord, “From now on I resolve to do Your will.” (The Overcoming Life, pp. 170-176)

THE RESULT OF CONSECRATION

To Abandon Our Future

The result of consecration is that we are caused to cut off all our relationships with people, matters, and things, and especially to abandon our future and wholly belong to God. We need to consider this matter also in the light of the offerings of the Old Testament. When a bullock was taken for sacrifice and offered upon the altar, he was immediately cut off from all his previous relationships. He was severed from his master, his companions, and his corral.

After he was consumed by fire, he even lost his original form and stature. All his choicest parts were changed to a sweet smelling savor to God, and all that was left was a heap of ashes. Everything was cut off, and everything was finished. This was the result of the bullock being offered to God. Since our consecration is also an offering to God, the result must also be the same. There must be the giving up of everything to be burned to ashes by God to the point where all is finished. If evidence of this relinquishing of all things and burning to ashes is not seen in a man, there is something wrong with his consecration. Some brothers and sisters still have hopes after their consecration of becoming such and such a person. This proves that their future has not been given up. (The Experience of Life, p. 40)

The Result of Consecration

What is the result of consecration? The first result is described in Romans 6, and the second result is described in Romans 12. Many people do not know the difference between the two. Actually, there is a great difference. The consecration in Romans 6 is for one’s own benefit; it is to bear the fruit of righteousness. The consecration in Romans 12 is for God’s benefit; it is for the accomplishment of God’s will. The result of consecration in Romans 6 is deliverance from sin to be a slave of God in order to bear fruit unto sanctification. This is what it means to live out the overcoming life day by day.

The result of the consecration in Romans 12 is not just God's pleasure but the proving of God's good, well pleasing, and perfect will....The consecration in Romans 12 is something for God. Hence, we have to remember that the consecration in chapter twelve has the goal of serving God. Chapter six is for personal sanctification, while chapter twelve is for the work.

The result of the presenting is in Romans 12:2. "Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect." This is our ultimate goal today. During the January conference of last year, we saw that God has an eternal purpose, which is accomplished through His Son. God created everything through Him for this purpose. Redemption is for this purpose, the defeat of Satan is for this purpose, and the salvation of sinners is for this purpose. We have to know God's eternal purpose before we can accomplish what God wants us to accomplish. We are not here merely for the salvation of sinners; we are here for the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose. Every kind of work must be linked up with God's eternal purpose. (The Overcoming Life, pp. 176-179)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, what is the base and motive of our consecration?

2. According to the Bible, what is the meaning and purpose of consecration?

3. What are the items of our consecration?

4. What is the result of consecration?

LESSON FOURTEEN

THE INFILLING AND OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Scripture Reading:

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there was a sound out of heaven, as of a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:4a And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:13 For also 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.

Eph. 5:18b ...but be filled in spirit.

Hymn: #8212—The Story of the Wind, the Cloud, the Fire, and the Electrum (Fullness of the Spirit—As the Wind)

OUTLINE

I. The two aspects of the filling of the Holy Spirit—Acts 2:4 note 2:

Acts 2:4 And they were all 2filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, even as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth.

Acts 2:4[2] Gk. pletho (used also in 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9; Luke 1:15, 41, 67), to fill outwardly. According to its usage in this book, pleroo denotes the filling of a vessel within, as the wind filled the house inwardly in v. 2, and pletho denotes the filling of persons outwardly, as the Spirit filled the disciples outwardly in this verse. The disciples were filled (pleroo) inwardly and essentially with the Spirit (13:52) for their Christian living, and were filled (pletho) outwardly and economically with the Spirit for their Christian ministry. The inward filling Spirit, the essential Spirit, is in the disciples (John 14:17; Rom. 8:11), whereas the outward filling Spirit, the economical Spirit, is upon them (1:8; 2:17). Every believer in Christ should experience both aspects of the Holy Spirit. Even Christ as a man experienced the same thing: He was born of the Holy Spirit essentially (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18, 20) for His being and living, and He was anointed with the Holy Spirit economically (Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:18) for His ministry and move. The essential Spirit was

within Him and the economical Spirit was upon Him.

The outward filling of the poured out Spirit was the ascended Head's baptizing of His Body into the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost the Jewish believers, the first part of His Body, were baptized; in the house of Cornelius the Gentile believers, the second part of His Body, were baptized in the same way (10:44-47). By these two steps He baptized once for all His entire Body into the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), who is the application and realization of Himself. His baptizing His Body into the Spirit was His baptizing it into Himself. This was the accomplishment of the baptism in the Holy Spirit promised in 1:5 by Christ, the Head of the Body.

A. The infilling of the Holy Spirit (pleroo)—Acts 2:2; 13:52:

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there was a sound out of heaven, as of a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

1. Pleroo denotes the filling of a vessel within, as the wind filled the house inwardly in Acts 2:2.

2. The inward and essential filling of the Spirit (pleroo) within the disciples is for the living of the Christian life—Acts 13:52; Eph. 5:18.

Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Eph. 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,

3. The infilling Spirit is the essential Spirit inside the disciples—John 14:17; Rom. 8:11.

John 14:17 Even 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.

Rom. 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

B. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit (pletho)—Acts 2:4a; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9:

Acts 2:4a And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers of the people and elders.

Acts 4:31 And when they had so besought, the place in which they were gathered

was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Acts 9:17 And Ananias went away and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him, he said, Saul, brother, the Lord has sent me—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road on which you were coming—so that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:9 But Saul, who is also Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him

1. Pletho denotes the outpouring of the Spirit upon men, the Spirit poured upon the disciples on the outside as in Acts 2:4.

2. The outward and economical filling of the Spirit upon the disciples is for the ministry of the Christian.

3. The outpoured Spirit is the economical Spirit upon the disciples—Acts 1:8; 2:17.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 2:17 And it shall be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream things in dreams;

C. Every believer in Christ should experience both of these aspects of the filling of the Holy Spirit.

II. The meaning of the infilling of the Holy Spirit:

A. The meaning of the infilling of the Holy Spirit:

1. To be filled in our spirit is to be filled by the essential Spirit—Eph. 5:18.

Eph. 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit.

2. The essential Spirit is the life-giving spirit; it is the Spirit of reality as the realization of Christ (John 14:17), the ultimate consummation of the Triune God—1 Cor. 15:45b.

John 14:17 Even 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.

1 Cor. 15:45 …The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

3. When Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, fully occupies, possesses and makes home in our heart, then we are fully and completely occupied by the Triune God—Eph. 3:17a, 19b.

Eph. 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith…

Eph. 3:19b …that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

B. The infilling of the Holy Spirit is more precious than the outpouring of the Holy Spirit:

1. The twenty-two books after the book of Acts in the New Testament emphasize the infilling.

2. To be baptized is the outpouring, to drink is the infilling; the infilling spontaneously results in the outpouring—1 Cor. 12:13.

1 Cor. 12:13 For also 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.

C. Inoculation—The Bible does not say that to be filled with the Holy Spirit, one must speak in tongue—Acts 2:4, 8, 11 note 1; 4:8a, 31; 10:46 note 1, 47 note 1.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, even as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth.

Acts 2:8 And how is it that we each hear them in our own dialect in which we were born?

Acts 2:11[1] Gk. glossa, used for two things in this chapter: the speaking organ in v.3, and dialects in this verse and v. 4, referring to the dialect in vv. 6 and 8. This evidence leaves no ground for saying that tongue-speaking may be merely a voice or sound uttered by the tongue, the speaking organ; it must be a dialect, because what the disciples spoke in tongues (vv. 4, 11) were all different dialects (vv. 6, 8). In this sense, tongues and dialects are synonymous, used interchangeably in these verses.

Acts 4:8a Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit…

Acts 4:31 And when they had so besought, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Acts 10:46[1] Speaking in tongues was not the unique issue of receiving the Holy Spirit economically, because in this case the magnifying, that is, the praising, of God was also one of its issues, as was prophesying in the case of the twelve believers in Ephesus (19:6). Hence, speaking in tongues is not the only evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit economically; neither is it the necessary evidence, because there is at

least one case of the receiving of the Holy Spirit economically, the case of the Samaritan believers (8:15-17), which does not mention speaking in tongues. In the case of Saul of Tarsus (9:17) concerning this matter, there again is no mention of speaking in tongues, although he told us later, in 1 Cor. 14:18, that he spoke in tongues.

Acts 10:47[1] Like the early apostles and the Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost (2:4), the Gentile believers in the house of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit economically directly from the ascended Head. Only these two instances in the New Testament are considered the baptism in the Holy Spirit (1:5; 11:15-16). By these two steps the Head of the Body baptized all His believers, both Jewish and Gentile, once for all into His one Body (1 Cor. 12:13). Hence, the baptism in the Spirit is an accomplished fact carried out by Christ in His ascension, on the day of Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius. None of the other cases—the Samaritan believers in ch. 8, Saul of Tarsus in ch. 9, and the twelve Ephesian believers in ch. 19—are considered the baptism in the Holy Spirit according to the revelation of the New Testament. These other cases were merely the believers' experiences of the once-for-all-accomplished baptism in the Holy Spirit.

In this book, concerning the believers' receiving of the Holy Spirit economically, that is, the Holy Spirit's falling upon them, only five cases are mentioned. Two of them are for the accomplishing of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. These are the instances that occurred on the day of Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius. The other three—the cases of the Samaritan believers, Saul of Tarsus, and the twelve believers in Ephesus—are considered extraordinary, in that some members of the Body of Christ were needed to identify those believers with the Body by the laying on of hands. Besides these five cases, in many cases of conversion, such as the three thousand (2:41), the five thousand (4:4), the Ethiopian eunuch (8:36, 38- 39a), the many who believed in Antioch (11:20-21, 24), the many instances in chs. 13 and 14 under Paul's preaching ministry, Lydia in Philippi (16:14-15), the jailer in Philippi (16:33), the believers in Thessalonica (17:4), the believers in Berea (17:10-12), the believers in Athens (17:34), the ruler of the synagogue and many other believers in Corinth (18:8), and the believers in Ephesus (19:18-19), there is no mention of the believers' receiving of the Holy Spirit economically—the Holy Spirit's falling upon the believers—because in all these cases the believers were brought into the Body of Christ in a normal way through their believing and had no particular need for a member of the Body of Christ to bring them into identification with the Body by the laying on of hands. According to the principle of God's New Testament economy, they all must have received the Holy Spirit essentially for life and economically for power in a normal way through their believing into Christ.

III. The result and manifestation of infilling and outpouring of the

Holy Spirit.

A. In the essential aspect (infilling):

1. To be filled with joy and the Holy Spirit—Acts 13:52.

Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

2. To praise and speak words of admonition—Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16.

Eph. 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,

Eph. 5:19 Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

3. To speak words of wisdom, knowledge, and prophecy—1 Cor. 12:7, 8, 10.

1 Cor. 12:7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is profitable.

1 Cor. 12:8 For to one through the Spirit a word of wisdom is given, and to another a word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:10 And to another operations of works of power, and to another prophecy, and to another discerning of spirits; to a different one various kinds of tongues, and to another interpretation of tongues.

4. To live by the spirit and walk according to the spirit—Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25.

Rom. 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

Gal. 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Gal. 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

5. To produce the fruits of the Spirit—Gal. 5:22-23.

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Gal. 5:23 Meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

B. In the economical aspect (outpouring):

1. The miraculous gifts: speaking in tongues, prophesying, healing, and works of power—Acts 2:4; 10:45-46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:9-10.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, even as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth.

Acts 10:45 And the believers who were of the circumcision, as many as had accompanied Peter, were amazed, because on the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out;

Acts 10:46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and magnifying God. Then Peter answered.

Acts 19:6 And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

1 Cor. 12:9 To a different one faith in the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing in the one Spirit,

1 Cor. 12:10 And to another operations of works of power, and to another prophecy, and to another discerning of spirits; to a different one various kinds of tongues, and to another interpretation of tongues.

2. Speaking the words of God with boldness—Acts 4:8, 31; 13:9.

Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers of the people and elders.

Acts 4:31 And when they had so besought, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Acts 13:9 But Saul, who is also Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him.

IV. The way to be infilled with the Holy Spirit:

A. Confess our sins thoroughly every day to allow the Holy Spirit to fill every space—Acts 2:37-38; Eph. 5:18.

Acts 2:37 And when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, What should we do, brothers?

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Eph. 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit.

B. Exercise to call on the Lord and to speak the Lord for us to be infilled with the Holy Spirit all day long—Rom. 10:8, 13; Col. 3:16.

Rom. 10:8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of the faith which we proclaim,

Rom. 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and

admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

V. The secret of maintaining the infilling of the Holy Spirit:

A. Not quenching the Spirit—1 Thes. 5:19.

1 Thes. 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit.

B. Not grieving the Holy Spirit—Eph. 4:30.

Eph. 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.

C. Obeying the Holy Spirit—Acts 5:32.

Acts 5:32 And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.

REFERENCE

Vessels Useful to the Lord, Chs. 7-8, 10, 12; Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 1, Chs. 9, 12.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

ESSENTIAL FILLING AND THE ECONOMICAL FILLING

There are two aspects of the filling of the Holy Spirit—the essential filling of the Holy Spirit in life and the economical filling of the Holy Spirit in power. However, you must study further to see what verses in the Bible speak of the aspect of the essential filling of the Holy Spirit and the aspect of the economical filling of the Holy Spirit. In this way, when you go out to teach people, you will be able to quote the verses from the Scriptures and speak to them in a logical way so that they may understand, be convinced by, and receive your speaking. (Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 7)

It is very foolish if we study the truths in the Bible without using the Life-Studies and the Recovery Version of the Bible. To study the essential and economical filling of the Holy Spirit, we must learn to use the footnotes of the Recovery Version and the Life-Studies.

Acts 2:4a says, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.” The footnote of the Recovery Version clearly indicates that the Greek word pletho (used also in 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9; Luke 1:15, 41, 67) refers to the outward filling. According to its usage in this book, pleroo denotes the filling of a vessel within, as the wind filled the house inwardly in 2:2, and pletho denotes the filling of persons outwardly, as the Spirit filled the disciples outwardly in verse 4. The disciples were filled (pleroo) inwardly and essentially with the Spirit (13:52) for their Christian living, and were filled (pletho) outwardly and economically with the Spirit for their Christian ministry. The inward filling Spirit, the essential Spirit, is in the disciples (John 14:17; Rom. 8:11), whereas the outward filling Spirit, the economical Spirit, is upon them (1:8; 2:17). Every believer in Christ should experience both aspects of the Holy Spirit. Even Christ as a man experienced the same thing: He was born of the Holy Spirit essentially (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18, 20) for His being and living, and He was anointed with the Holy Spirit economically (Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:18) for His ministry and move. The essential Spirit was within Him and the economical Spirit was upon Him. ((Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 8)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Man’s spirit is more important than his body. Thus, Ephesians 5:18 says, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit.” To be drunk with wine is to be filled in the body. Here it says that we should not be filled with wine in our body; rather, we should be filled in the spirit. We need to be filled with Christ unto all the fullness of God (1:23; 3:19). Today all the riches of Christ is in the life-giving Spirit. Hence, for us to be filled in the spirit is to be filled with the essential Spirit. The essential Spirit is the life-giving Spirit, which is spoken of in John 14:17—the Spirit of reality as the realization of Christ.

The essential Spirit must pass through a process in order to fill us. The essential Spirit is the consummation of the Triune God. Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God, and the life-giving Spirit is the consummation of the Triune God. The consummation of the Triune God, the ultimate expression of the Triune God, when reaching us, is the life-giving Spirit, the essential Spirit. We need to be filled with the essential Spirit in our spirit.

Ephesians 3:17 tells us that Christ has to make His home in our hearts. This is the essential Spirit in our spirit filling us completely. Then Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God will occupy our hearts and make His home in our hearts. When we are filled in our spirit experientially with the essential Spirit who is the consummation of the Triune God, Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God will fully occupy, possess, and make His home in our hearts. At the end we will be filled and occupied with the Triune God completely. This is the significance of the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Ch. 7)

The Essential Filling Of The Holy Spirit Being More Precious Than The Economical Filling Of The Holy Spirit

When we mention the infilling of the Holy Spirit, in which part does He really fill us? According to Ephesians 5:18, He is filling us in the spirit. Thus, when we speak of the infilling of the Holy Spirit, it is a proper way to use Acts 13:52 and Ephesians 5:18.... However, the essential filling of the Holy Spirit is different from the economical filling of the Holy Spirit; the economical filling of the Holy Spirit is far less precious than the essential filling of the Holy Spirit. Hence, in the New Testament after the book of Acts, in the twenty-two Epistles, from Romans to Revelation, the word of outward filling is not used; instead, the inward filling is emphasized.... First Corinthians 12:13 says, “We were all baptized into one Body..., and were all given to drink one Spirit.” Here the conjunction “and” indicates that to be baptized and to drink are two matters; to be baptized is to be filled outwardly, whereas to drink is to be filled inwardly. (Ch. 7)

Inoculation—The Bible Having Never Said That To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit Must Speak In Tongues

The Bible has never said that those who are filled with the Holy Spirit must speak in tongues. Today people are thirsty for God. Due to the lack of truth, the Pentecostal movement uses tongue-speaking as the goal to attract people and ask them to pursue. Actually, their so-called speaking in tongues is to ask

people to roll their tongues and speak nonsense. At the end, they are filled not with the Holy Spirit, not even the evil spirit, but themselves.

This kind of fellowship, on the one hand, is to help you and give you the right way to pursue the filling of the Holy Spirit; while on the other hand, is to inoculate you. When you speak of the filling of the Holy Spirit, people will tell you, "Yes, we also talk about the filling of the Holy Spirit. Do you speak in tongues?" If you say no, this means that you are already poisoned. You must be clear that the filling of the Holy Spirit is of two sides: one is outward, whereas one is inward. The outward aspect is mentioned only in Acts, but in the Epistles, from Romans to Revelation, only the inward filling is emphasized because it is the most important aspect. (Ch. 7)

Today the processed Triune God has been consummated as the all-inclusive Spirit. People of the Pentecostal movement hold the view that we must fast and do something until we hear a big noise, then when we open our mouth and speak in tongues, we will receive the Holy Spirit. This is altogether a nonsense. After the Triune God accomplished the redemption, He became the life-giving Spirit, like the air, which is in our mouth and in our heart. As long as we open our mouth to call on the Lord's name, we will receive the Holy Spirit and be saved (Rom. 10:8-13). However, after our salvation, we still have to be filled with the Holy Spirit through prayers and confessions. (Ch. 10)

THE ISSUE AND MANIFESTATION OF THE FILLING AND OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The New Testament shows us that concerning the issues and manifestations of the filling and outpouring of the Spirit, only a small number of items are miraculous, such as tongue-speaking, healing, works of power, and predicting. In Paul's Epistles, he did not encourage people to exercise these four kinds of gifts in the meeting. On the contrary, he said in 1 Corinthians chapter fourteen that if there is one who wants to speak in tongues in the meeting, but there is no one to interpret, then that one should be silent (vv. 27-28). We cannot find any evidence from the Bible that there definitely should be the works of power, tongue-speaking, healing, or predicting in the meetings. Therefore, we should not be disturbed by thinking

that these few items must be in the meetings. What the Bible considers to be the more important issues and manifestations of the filling and outpouring of the Spirit are five items in the essential (filling) aspect:

The first is being filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:52). Whether you feel troubled or sorrowful, you only need to call, “O Lord Jesus!” You will become joyful and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The second is speaking words of praise, of teaching, and of admonition. These words are already in the Bible, which is the “word of Christ” mentioned in Colossians chapter three. The psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs mentioned in Ephesians chapter five are not only in the Bible, but also in our hymnal. ...We all need to practice this. First practice in your home, using the words of the Bible or the hymns to speak one to another. When you go to the small group meeting, use these words to speak to others. In this way, the entire meeting will become living. We all need to practice speaking these two kinds of words; one kind are the words from the Bible, and the other kind are the words of the hymns.

The third is speaking the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and the word of prophecy (1 Cor. 12:7, 8, 10). This is to speak concerning the revelation concerning God and Christ, speaking for God, and speaking forth God.

The fourth is living by the Spirit and walking according to the spirit. (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25). As soon as we get up every morning, we should call “O Lord Jesus!” We should practice this all day long, and gradually we will live according to the Spirit. This is also what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Fifth, when we live by the Spirit and walk according to the Spirit, the result is that we will be able to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). If we live in this way, we will surely desire to meet together. Moreover, regardless of whether we meet with family members, or with a small number of saints, or even with many saints, our meetings will definitely be living and rich.

Then, in the economical (pouring out) aspect, besides tongue-speaking, predicting, healing, and works of power (Acts 2:4; 10:45-46; 19:6; 1 Cor.

12:9-10), the most important item is to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:8, 31; 13:9). As long as we live by the Spirit, walk according to the Spirit, and are overcomers, when we come to the meeting, spontaneously we will speak the word of God and testify for the Lord with boldness. These are the issues and manifestations of the filling and the outpouring of the Spirit. (Words of Training for the New Way, pp. 119-121)

THE WAY TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Allowing The Holy Spirit To Fill Every Room Through Thorough Prayers And Confessions Every Day

How can we be filled with the Triune God? It is through thorough prayers and confessions. When you receive the full-time training, you all are willing to renew your consecration. Even though this is good, the most precious thing is that you have to find a time from your busy schedule to kneel down before the Lord personally and have a thorough prayer of confession. In the beginning you may tell the Lord, "O Lord, forgive me. Although you have forgiven me all my sins, until today, I have never had a thoroughly confession and dealing. Today I am willing to confess all of my sins thoroughly before You. Please shine on me!"

When you pray, do not try to seek for feeling. You have to believe that the Lord's Spirit is with you. You do not need to confess according to a sequence, but according to what you feel and your memory, confess your sins to the Lord one by one until you have nothing more to confess from your feeling and memory. Then you should believe that it is at this time, you are filled with the ultimate consummation of the Triune God in your spirit. From the time you became a Christian, you should have one time of this kind of thorough confession. This resembles the medical treatment designed to eliminate all the germs and diseases from your blood by changing your blood for the health sake. Everyone of you needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit in this way.

How much are you filled with the Holy Spirit depends on how much room you give Him. The more room you give Him, the more the Holy Spirit can fill you. Just as how much air can fill the bottle depends on the space in the bottle. If the bottle is half-filled with soil, air can only fill the bottle half-way; but the

more the bottle is emptied out, the more air can fill it. In the same way, the more you empty out the stains of sin in you and the more you clear up the filthiness in you, the more the Holy Spirit can fill you. As you are emptied out, the Holy Spirit is filling you. Until you are emptied out from all the filthiness, you are completely filled with the Holy Spirit. (Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 7)

Now what we need is to be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says that we have to be filled in spirit. With what should we be filled? We should be filled with the Spirit, the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit who is the processed Triune God. How can we be filled? We can be filled through prayer and confession. Confession includes repentance. On the day of Pentecost, after the people heard the gospel and were touched, they asked Peter what should they do in order to be saved. Then Peter told them, "Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). This shows us that as long as we fulfill the principle of repenting, confessing, and dealing thoroughly with sins, we will definitely receive the Holy Spirit. Just as we receive the Holy Spirit and are saved through repentance and confession, today we also obtain the filling of the Holy Spirit through repentance and confession.

Regeneration and salvation are once and for all, but repentance and confession are to be experienced day by day throughout our whole life. Like washing our hands, it is not that once we were born, we only wash our hands once and there is no need to wash them again, but we have to wash our hands a few times every day. Like breathing, it is not that once we have a deep breath, we do not need to breathe anymore, but we have to breathe unceasingly to survive. Breathing is our prayer, and the washing of hands is our confession. If we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we must pray and confess every day. (Ch. 10)

Practicing to be Filled With the Spirit by Calling on the Lord and Speaking the Lord All the Day Long

Therefore, when we get up in the morning, the best thing for us to do is not to think about other things, but only to think about the Lord Jesus. It is easy to talk about this, but it is not simple to practice. This is because we all have many things filling our hearts. In spite of this, we still need to practice. ...You need to call on the Lord in this way in the morning. Then during the whole day, you need to practice speaking the Lord. When there is no one with you, you should call on the Lord Jesus; when there are others with you, you should speak the Lord Jesus to them. ...Eventually, what you breathe is the Lord Jesus, and what you speak is also the Lord Jesus. Then you will definitely be filled with the Triune God who is the Spirit. This is a very normal matter. This should be our normal daily living. (Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 1, p.90)

THE SECRETS OF MAINTAINING THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Not Quenching The Spirit

After we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we still have to do a few things in order to maintain the filling of the Holy Spirit. First, we should not quench the Spirit (1 Thes. 5:19). The Spirit makes us burning in spirit (Rom. 12:11) and fans into flames the gift which is in us (2 Tim. 1:6). Hence, we should not quench the Spirit.

Not Grieving The Holy Spirit

Second, we should not grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). To grieve the Holy Spirit is to displease Him and not to walk according to Him in our daily living (Rom. 8:4). How do we know if the Holy Spirit grieves? This can be confirmed by our living. If you are not joyful in your Christian life, this is the sign that the Holy Spirit is grieving in you. It is because the Holy Spirit is grieving in you that you are not joyful. If you are joyful, this indicates that the Holy Spirit in you is also joyful. A sister testified that she prayed to an extent that her whole being was comfortable, light, and full of joy; this indicates that the Holy Spirit in her was joyful. Hence, not to grieve the Holy Spirit is not to grieve yourself.

Obeying The Holy Spirit

Third, on the positive side, you have to obey the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5, Peter says, "...the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him" (v. 32). This shows that the Holy Spirit is for us to obey. Obedience is the way and requirement for us to enjoy the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:4 also mentions, "Do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit." This is the way to be filled with the Holy Spirit and the requirement to maintain ourselves to be filled. We not only have to study these verses, but we also need to put them into practice in our daily living. (Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 10)

QUESTIONS

1. Please briefly explain the two aspects of the filling of the Holy Spirit according to the Bible.
2. What is the meaning of the infilling of the Holy Spirit?
3. What is the result of the infilling and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?
4. How do we get filled by the Holy Spirit?
5. What is the secret in maintaining the infilling of the Holy Spirit?

LESSON FIFTEEN

THE SENSE OF LIFE

Scripture Reading:

Rom. 8:4-6 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit. For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Phil. 2:12-13 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

Hymn: 1119

OUTLINE

I. The knowledge of the Sense of life:

A. The light of life—1 John 5:11-12; John 1:4.

1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.

1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

B. God has inscribed His laws on our heart—Heb. 8:10.

Heb. 8:10 For this is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them; and I will be God to them, and they will be a people to Me.

C. The law of the Spirit of life—Rom. 8:2.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

D. God who operates in us—Phil. 2:13.

Phil. 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.

E. Christ who lives in us—Gal. 2:20.

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

F. The anointing within—1 John 2:27; Luke 4:18; 2 Cor. 1:21-22.

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to announce the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed.

2 Cor. 1:21 But the One who firmly attaches us with you unto Christ and has anointed us is God,

2 Cor. 1:22 He who has also sealed us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

II. The source of the sense of life:

A. The light of life shining within us.

B. The laws which God has written on our heart.

C. The law of the Spirit of life manifesting its' functions within us.

D. God who is operating within us.

E. Christ within us, is "living".

F. The anointing within us.

III. Our responsibilities towards the sense of life:

A. Walking only by the spirit, setting the mind on the spirit—Rom. 8:4-6.

Rom. 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

Rom. 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh;

but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

B. Caring for the sense of life within—Rom. 8:6.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

C. Obeying with fear and trembling—Phil. 2:12.

Phil. 2:12 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

D. Abiding in Him as His anointing is teaching you concerning all things—1 John 2:27.

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

IV. The results of obeying the sense of life:

A. Enjoying life and peace—Rom. 8:6.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

B. Abiding in the Lord—1 John 2:27.

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

C. Working out own salvation—Phil. 2:12.

Phil. 2:12 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

D. Accomplishing God's good pleasure—Phil. 2:12-13.

Phil. 2:12 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Phil. 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.

REFERENCE

The Knowledge of Life, Ch. 5; Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Lsn. 21.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SENSE OF LIFE

The Light of Life

When we receive the Son of God as our Lord, we have the Son of God, and we also have the life because the life is in the Son of God. “This life was the light of men,” so when we have the life, we also have the light of life enlightening us from within. We who have life do not need to seek some outward light because within us there is a marvelous light, which is the Lord in us as the glorious life.

The Law Of God Being Written On Our Hearts

In the Old Testament the law of God was written on tablets of stone outside of man. But here it says that in the New Testament, God will impart His laws into us and write them on our hearts.... [Take a tree as an example.] When God puts the [budding and blossoming] life into [the tree], He simultaneously puts all the things included in the life into it. It can be said that God is putting these laws into it and writing them on its heart.

In the past on Mount Sinai, God commanded the people not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to lie; all these were laws outside of the people. Now God comes and through His life, puts His laws into us, writing them on our hearts. His life includes His laws. When He puts His life into us, He is also putting the laws in His life into us. When we have His life in us, we also have the laws in His life. Therefore, the laws which He writes in us are also the law of life. The law of life within us spontaneously prevents us from committing adultery, stealing, lying, and doing anything else that is not pleasing to God. God does not need to command us outwardly because the law in His life causes us to know Him inwardly and to know His ordinances.

The Law of the Spirit of Life

What is the law of the Spirit of life? It is a spontaneous power, a spontaneous function. The Spirit of life is God's Spirit in our spirit. Since this Spirit is of life, His law must also be of life. Therefore, the law of the Spirit of life, is also a law of life. A law is not necessarily a life, but a life is always a law with a spontaneous power and function. Regardless whether they are animal lives or vegetable lives, all lives have a law and all have a spontaneous power and function. Flight is the law of the life in flying birds, and it is the spontaneous power of life in flying birds. Bearing fruit is the law of the life of a fruit tree and is also the spontaneous power of the fruit tree. The higher a life is, the stronger its law and the greater its spontaneous power and function. Since what we have received inwardly from the Holy Spirit is the highest life, it is not just a law in us; even more, it is the highest law. It is not just a spontaneous power and function in us; even more, it is the highest spontaneous power and function. This law, this spontaneous power and function operate in us through God's Spirit of power to free us from the law of sin and of death, that is to free us from everything opposed to God. We do not need to decide or determine anything; we do not need to struggle or strive; the law of the Spirit of life will operate in us spontaneously to work out its power and manifest its function.

God Operating In Us

God is operating in us! This is a marvelous thing! Perhaps you know that God is in you, but you still do not realize that God is operating in you. God in us is not without His work and activity. He has His work in us and is constantly operating. Regardless of what we will inwardly or do outwardly, He is always operating in us, causing us to know and obey His will for the accomplishment of His good pleasure.

Christ Living In Us

Christ is in us not only as life but also as the One living in us. Since He is living in us, He must be doing a significant work in us.

Christ is in us from the time we believe. As long as we believe in Christ, then He gets into us. Moreover, He is not without His work in us because His is living and working.

The Anointing Moving In Us

Anointing in the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38). Therefore, the anointing is the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit operates in us as the anointing, which makes known the will of the Lord to us. Thus, the anointing within us teaches us in all things. The knowledge concerning whatever requirement the Lord has of us, whatever leading He has, whatever we should do before Him, and however we should do things, is make known to us through the teaching of the anointing. (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 2, Ch. 21)

THE SOURCE OF THE SENSE OF LIFE

The Enlightening of the Light of Life in Us

Since the light of life is the Lord's life within us enlightening us, this enlightening must cause us to have the inward sense of life. What our inward life causes us to sense is what our the light of life within us causes us to see. Our inward sense that a certain matter does not please the Lord is also our inward seeing that this matter does not please the Lord. Therefore, our inward sense is just our inward seeing.

The Law of God Written on Our Hearts and the Law of the Spirit of Life Functioning in Us

God's law, which He writes on our hearts, and the law of the Spirit of life within us are both spontaneous functions of the Lord's life within us. When they function within us, we have an inward sense. This sense is the sense of life giving us a feeling according to the function of the law of life. However, we do not have much sense when we follow the sense of life; rather, when we go against it, we have a very clear feeling. When the digestion in our stomach is normal, we do not sense it much; when something goes wrong with it, we have a strong feeling. When you disobey God, you are disobeying the sense of

life in your actions, and the sense of life within you will become especially strong. When you come to the meetings, you are following the sense of life, so you do not have much feeling of it; when you go to the show, you are disobeying the sense of life, so it gives you a clear feeling within.

The Operation of God in Us

Because God's operation within us is a kind of activity, it certainly gives us an inward sense. When my hand touches his forehead, he will certainly feel it. When a person is very busy, he doesn't really feel the rubbing. But when he is quiet, even a slight brushing against or touch will be felt by him. When you are busy all day, when your heart and soul are not quiet, or when you are nervous and worried about everything, you will be unable to sense God's operation within you. If you would be willing to quiet yourself down, then God's operation within you would appear in your senses and you would feel Him operating within you. God's operation within us is a kind of work with respect to God, and with respect to us it is a kind of sense of life produced within us. As long as our condition is proper, this sense of life will be felt by us.

Christ Being "Living" in Us

Christ in us is not just life or alive, He is also living in us by His life. When He lives in us, He takes some action, so He can be felt by us inwardly. Because this sense comes from the activity of the life within us, it must belong to this life and can be considered a sense of life.

The Anointing in Us

The anointing teaches us inwardly through its moving. When the anointing is teaching us, it is the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking within us, and it is the inward light of the revelation of the Holy Spirit. These several different kinds of terminology all refer to one thing: that is, the operation of the Holy Spirit within us. Since this operation is the moving of the Holy Spirit within our spirit, we certainly will have a sense of life in our spirit. This sense of life gives us feeling in our spirit, which means that it causes us to hear things from the Holy Spirit and see things by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, we do not merely have life within us; we also have the sense of life. The light of life within us enlightens us, the law of life within us manifests its function, God Himself operates within us, Christ lives in us, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit anoints us inwardly. All these cause us to have a sense of life within; moreover, the inward sense of life which they give us is rich and strong. (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 2, Ch. 21)

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BELIEVERS TOWARD THE SENSE OF LIFE

Following The Spirit—Setting The Mind On The Spirit

Our inner sense of life comes out from the Holy Spirit, and it is in our spirit. Thus, our first responsibility with regard to the sense of life is to walk according to the spirit and to set the mind on the spirit in all things. Our walking according to the spirit and setting the mind on the spirit is our walking according to the sense of life and our setting the mind on the sense of life, and it is our obeying the sense of life. With respect to the sense of life, the most important point is obedience. Regardless of the time, regardless of the matter, as soon as you have the inner sense of life, you should obey immediately. The most precious thing about being Christian is this point. If we want to obey the sense of life, we should walk according to the spirit and set the mind on the spirit.

Caring For The Inward Sense Of Life And Peace

The sense of life within us is also a kind of sense of peace. When we obey it, it gives us a feeling not only of life but also of peace. Therefore, no matter what the situation, as soon as we feel death instead of life and uneasiness instead of peace, we should immediately stop. We must always care for the inward sense of life and peace. If we would care for it in this way, we must set our mind on the spirit. Only setting the mind on the spirit is life and peace. (Ch. 21)

Obeying With Fear and Trembling

If the believers want to keep themselves from losing the sense of life, they must be in fear and trembling as they care for and obey every inward sense of life. It is only in this way that you will be able to maintain the sense of life within you.

If the sense of life within a believer becomes dull, it must be because he has ignored it or disobeyed it. If this believer is willing to obey that small, flickering sense of life within him, then the sense of life will revive and recover. Even though our inward sense of life sometimes becomes dull and flickering because we ignore it or disobey it, it never dies out entirely or disappears completely. There is still a little left there. If we are willing to care for and obey that remaining, small sense of life, it will immediately recover. Thus, to recover the sense of life, we must also care for and obey it.

If a believer's sense of life is sharp, it must be because he has obeyed everything he has felt. If a believer continues obeying everything he feels, then his sense of life will be strong and sharp. The more a believer obeys the sense of life, the more the sense of life increases. Therefore, our obedience is what increases the sense of life within us. (Ch. 21)

Living In The Lord
According To The Teaching Of The Anointing

The teaching of the anointing within us causes us to know the Lord and His life. Therefore, we should abide in the Lord and fellowship with Him according to this teaching. According to the teaching of the anointing means to obey the painting of the Holy Spirit within us. This is the only way for us to be in the Lord and to have the fellowship of life with the Lord. (p. 411)

THE RESULT OF THE BELIEVERS' OBEYING THE SENSE OF LIFE

Receiving Life and Peace

To set the mind on the spirit is to obey the sense of life, and the result is life and peace. Life is satisfaction, and peace is rest. If we set our mind on the spirit, if we obey the sense of life, we will inwardly feel satisfaction and rest,

very satisfied and very peaceful; otherwise, we will inwardly feel dissatisfied, as if we were missing something, restless, bothered, as if there were some problem. No matter what the situation, obeying the sense of life is the only way for our life to be nourished and our hearts and spirits to obtain rest. Even the matters of praying and preaching the word are like this; we must set the mind on the spirit in order to be able to touch the Lord's presence, that is, to touch life and peace. When we obey the sense of life, the more we speak, the more we will feel satisfied; the more we speak, the more we will receive the inward supply. Or the more we pray, the more we will be at peace; the more we pray, the more we will feel watered in spirit. This kind of sense of satisfaction and rest is the result of our obeying the inward sense of life.

Abiding In the Lord

If we walk according to the teaching of the anointing, we will abide in the Lord. Abiding in the Lord means that in our spirit, we have no separation from Him and we have constant fellowship with Him. If we want this, we must act according to the anointing within us, and we must obey the inward sense of life from the Holy Spirit. It is only when we live in the anointing and obey the sense of life in our actions that we can be kept from losing our fellowship with the Lord and can constantly abide in Him. Thus, abiding in the Lord is also a result of obeying the sense of life.

Working Out Our Salvation

We have already received salvation. But after receiving salvation, we still have to work or live it out. If we want to live out our salvation, then we must obey with fear and trembling God who operates in us, and that means we must obey the sense of life within us that comes from God's operation. If we would be willing to obey, then we will live out God's salvation.

Accomplishing His Good Pleasure

God causes us to do His will, doing in us that which is well pleasing in His sight. He does not merely do this through outward Bible teachings or through environmental leading; He even more operates within us, letting us know His will on the one hand, and giving us strength to do that which is well pleasing

to Him on the other. His will and His good pleasure are sensed through the inward sense of life given to us by His operation. When we obey the inward sense of life, we spontaneously obey God's will and do that which is well pleasing to Him. Thus, obeying God's will and accomplishing His good pleasure are also the certain result of our obeying the sense of life.

Thus, we see that obeying the sense of life is such an important matter! The supply of life and the growth in life, the intimacy with the Lord and our fellowship with Him, the working out God's salvation and our expressing Him, the obeying God's will and the accomplishing of His good pleasure, are all critically based on the sense of life! We can say that all matters of the spiritual life and all matters between us and God are entered into properly and carried forward through this one point: the sense of life. (Ch. 21)

QUESTIONS

1. Why, according to the Bible, do we have the sense of life?
2. What are the responsibilities of the believers to the sense of life?
3. What are the results of being obedient to the sense of life?

LESSON SIXTEEN

THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

Scripture Reading:

1 John 1:2-3 And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us; That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:7, 9 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin…If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Hymn: 737

OUTLINE

I. The source of the fellowship of life—the eternal life—1 John 1:2-3.

1 John 1:2 (And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us);

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

II. The meaning of the fellowship of life—1 John 1:3 note 3.

1 John 1:3[3] The Greek word means joint participation, common participation. Fellowship is the issue of the eternal life and is actually the flow of the eternal life within all the believers, who have received and possess the divine life. It is illustrated by the flow of the water of life in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:1). All genuine believers are in this fellowship (Acts 2:42). It is carried on by the Spirit in our regenerated spirit. Hence, it is called "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14) and "fellowship of [our] spirit" (Phil. 2:1). It is in this fellowship of the eternal life that we, the believers, participate in all that the Father and the Son are and have done for us; that is, we enjoy the love of the Father and the grace of the Son by virtue of the fellowship of the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). Such a

fellowship was first the apostles' portion in their enjoyment of the Father and the Son through the Spirit. Hence, in Acts 2:42 it is called "the fellowship of the apostles," and in this verse "our [the apostles'] fellowship," a fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is a divine mystery. This mysterious fellowship of the eternal life should be considered the subject of this Epistle.

Fellowship here indicates a putting away of private interests and a joining with others for a certain common purpose. Hence, to have fellowship with the apostles, to be in the fellowship of the apostles, and to have fellowship with the Triune God in the apostles' fellowship is to put aside our private interests and join with the apostles and the Triune God for the carrying out of God's purpose. This purpose, according to John's subsequent writings, is twofold: (1) that the believers grow in the divine life by abiding in the Triune God (2:12-27) and, based on the divine birth, live a life of the divine righteousness and the divine love (2:28 —5:3) to overcome the world, death, sin, the devil, and idols (5:4-21) ; and (2) that the local churches be built up as the lampstands for the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1 —3) and consummate in the New Jerusalem as the full expression of God for eternity (Rev. 21 —22). Our participation in the apostles' enjoyment of the Triune God is our joining with them and with the Triune God for His divine purpose, which is common to God, the apostles, and all the believers.

A. Fellowship, the Greek word means joint participation, common participation.

B. Fellowship is the issue of the eternal life and is actually the flow of the eternal life within all the believers, who have received and possess the divine life—Rev. 22:1.

Rev. 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

C. Fellowship here indicates a putting away of private interests and a joining with others for a certain common purpose.

III. The two aspects of the fellowship of life:

A. The fellowship with the apostles and the church, whom they represent—1 John 1:2-3; 1 Cor. 12:28; Acts 2:41-42.

1 John 1:2 (And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us);

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1 Cor. 12:28 And God has placed some in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then works of power, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

Acts 2:41 Those then who received his word were baptized, and there were added on that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

B. The fellowship with God and the Lord Jesus—1 John 1:3.

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

IV. The medium of the fellowship of life—The Holy Spirit—The fellowship of the Holy Spirit—2 Cor. 13:14.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

V. The believers' responsibilities in regard to the fellowship of life:

A. Continuing steadfastly—Acts 2:42.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

B. Obeying the teaching of the anointing—1 John 2:27.

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

C. Walking in the light—1 John 1:7.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

D. Confessing our sins—1 John 1:7-9.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins

and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

VI. The result of the fellowship of life:

A. Receiving God's light—1 John 1:5-7.

1 John 1:5 And this is the message which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth;

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

B. Receiving the Lord's cleansing by His blood—1 John 1:7.

C. Receiving the Lord's abiding within—John 15:5.

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

D. Bearing much fruit to glorify God—John 15:5, 8.

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

John 15:8 In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and so you will become My disciples.

VII. The interruption of the fellowship of life:

A. The relationship between the believers and God are unbreakable—John 10:28-29.

John 10:28 And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.

John 10:29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand.

B. The fellowship between the believers and God can be interrupted—1 John 1:7.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

VIII. The restoration of the fellowship of life—through the confession of sins—1 John 1:9, 7.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

REFERENCE

Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 2, Lsn. 22; The Knowledge of Life, Ch. 6; Life Lessons, Lsn. 31.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE SOURCE OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

Where does the fellowship of life come from? What is its cause? And from what is it derived? 1 John 1:2-3 says: “We (the Apostles)...show unto you (the believers) the eternal life...that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” These verses show that the Apostles preached unto us “the eternal life” so that we may have “fellowship.” The eternal life is the life of God, and the life of God entering into us enables us to have fellowship. Since this fellowship comes out of the life of God, it is the fellowship of life. Therefore, the fellowship of life comes from the life of God; its existence is due to the life of God; it is derived from the life of God; and it is brought to us by the life of God. As soon as we obtain the life of God within us, this life of God enables us to have the fellowship of life. The life of God, therefore, is the source of the fellowship of life. (The Knowledge of Life, p. 55)

THE MEANING Of THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

The Greek word for fellowship means joint participation, common participation. Fellowship is the issue of the eternal life and is actually the flow of the eternal life within all the believers, who have received and possess the divine life. It is illustrated by the flow of the water of life in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:1). All genuine believers are in this fellowship (Acts 2:42). It is carried on by the Spirit in our regenerated spirit. Hence, it is called “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor. 13:14) and “fellowship of [our] spirit” (Phil. 2:1). It is in this fellowship of the eternal life that we, the believers, participate in all that the Father and the Son are and have done for us; that is, we enjoy the love of the Father and the grace of the Son by virtue of the

fellowship of the spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). Such a fellowship was first the apostles' portion in their enjoyment of the Father and the Son through the Spirit. Hence, in Acts 2:42 it is called "the fellowship of the apostles," and in this verse "our [the apostles'] fellowship," a fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is a divine mystery. This mysterious fellowship of the eternal life should be considered the subject of this Epistle.

Fellowship here indicates a putting away of private interests and a joining with others for a certain common purpose. Hence, to have fellowship with the apostles, to be in the fellowship of the apostles, and to have fellowship with the Triune God in the apostles' fellowship is to put aside our private interests and join with the apostles and the Triune God for the carrying out of God's purpose. This purpose, according to John's subsequent writings, is twofold: (1) that the believers grow in the divine life by abiding in the Triune God (2:12-27) and, based on the divine birth, live a life of the divine righteousness and the divine love (2:28-5:3) to overcome the world, death, sin, the devil, and idols (5:4-21); and (2) that the local churches be built up as the lampstands for the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1-3) and consummate in the New Jerusalem as the full expression of God for eternity (Rev. 21-22). Our participation in the apostles' enjoyment of the Triune God is our joining with them and with the Triune God for His divine purpose, which is common to God, the apostles, and all the believers. (New Testament Recovery Version, footnote 3 of 1 John 1:3)

THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

Fellowship With The Apostles And The Church They Represent

The life of God has come into us and into all those who have the life of God, it spontaneously causes us to have fellowship with them. This fellowship is in the one life of God, so it causes us to become one with them in this life. Although we who have this life are many, the life we all have is one. All of us have gained the one life of God together, so the life we have within is not just the same, it is one. In this one life, we are not just able to be similar, we can be one and can have fellowship with each other in oneness. This is like the lights in this room and the thousands of lights in this city are one in one flow of

electricity. They have fellowship in it. When we meet a brother or sister in the Lord, we both have an inward response, if there are no barriers, and we have fellowship with each other. It is as if we have a flow of electricity within us. This kind of fellowship is very precious. It gives us the watering and the supply of life. (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 2, Lsn. 22)

Fellowship With God And The Lord Jesus

The life of the Lord within us, on the one hand causes us to have fellowship with God and the Lord, on the other hand, it causes us to have fellowship with the church represented by the apostles and with all those who have the Lord's life. This is like the electricity in these lights. On the one hand it causes the lights to have fellowship with the electric power plant, and on the other hand it causes these lights to have fellowship with all the lights in the city. If one light breaks its fellowship with the electric power plant, its fellowship with the other lights in this room and with all the lights in the city is also broken. In the same way, if a person with the Lord's life breaks fellowship with the Lord, his fellowship with all those who have the Lord's life is also broken. Even though you and I both have the Lord's life, if either of us breaks our fellowship with the Lord, we cannot have the fellowship of life in the Lord together. If you have a problem with the Lord, you do not have to tell me. When I see you, I cannot fellowship with you because you are not connected to our electric power plant—the Lord. For this reason, you and I cannot connect. (Lsn. 22)

THE MEDIUM OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE—THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The life of God rests in the Holy Spirit of God, and it is through the Holy Spirit of God that the life of God enters into us and lives in us. Therefore, the fellowship brought to us by the life of God, though derived from the life of God, comes by means of the Holy Spirit of God. Hence, the Bible also calls this fellowship "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14, "communion" is "fellowship" in the original text). (The knowledge of Life, p. 56)

Whether we fellowship with God and the Lord or with the church or with a saint, it is all in the Holy Spirit and through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this fellowship of life, which is in and through the Holy Spirit, can become our life experience and spiritual reality only when we live in the Holy Spirit and follow the Holy Spirit. (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 2, Lsn. 22)

THE RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

If we want to continue in the fellowship of the Lord's life, we must abide in the Lord according to the teaching of the anointing. We must obey the teaching of the anointing. In the previous chapter we saw that the teaching of the anointing is the Holy Spirit operating in us. We must obey the Holy Spirit's operation in us and abide in the Lord according to this operation. This way we can continue to live in the fellowship of the Lord's life without a break. The moment we disobey the operation of the Holy Spirit, our fellowship with the Lord is broken.

If we live in the fellowship of the Lord's life, we are indeed in the Lord's light of life. This light of life of the Lord's in His fellowship of life inwardly causes us to see our sins. Once we see our sins in the fellowship of the Lord's life because of the Lord's light of life, we must confess our sins to God. If we are willing to confess our sins to God, they will be forgiven and cleansed by God. We will then be brought more deeply into the fellowship of the Lord's life. If we do not confess our sins, they will stay on us and cause our fellowship with the Lord to be broken. (Lsn. 22)

THE RESULTS OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

Obtaining the Light of God

God is light. If we fellowship with Him, we will have His light. Therefore, the fellowship of life brings us into the light of God so that we may have His light. Being in darkness is proof that we do not have fellowship with God or that our fellowship has been broken. If we have fellowship with God or with His children, we certainly are in the light of God. The fellowship of life and the light of God cannot be separated. If we are in the fellowship of life, we are in

the light of God. If we are not in the light of God, we have lost the fellowship of life.

Gaining The Cleansing Of The Blood

When in the fellowship of life we are enlightened by the Lord's light of life to see our sin's and confess them to God, the blood of the Lord cleanses us from our sins. Therefore, after we are saved, we can be cleansed from sin again by the blood of the Lord in the fellowship of the Lord's life. If we sin again after we are saved and loosely confess to God, we do not receive the cleansing of the Lord's blood. If we sin after being saved and want to receive the cleansing of the Lord's blood, we must first gain enlightenment by the Lord's light of life in the fellowship of the Lord's life. The cleansing of the Lord's blood cannot come without the fellowship of the Lord's life. If we don't have the fellowship of the Lord's life, we cannot be enlightened by the Lord's light of life. If we are not enlightened by the Lord's light of life, we cannot see our sins to confess them to God. If our sins are not seen and confessed, they cannot be cleansed by the Lord's blood. This is because if we sin again after we are saved, those sins must be confessed to God before they can be cleansed by the Lord's blood. In order to confess to God, we must be enlightened. To be enlightened we must live in the fellowship of life. Therefore, it is the fellowship of life that causes the sin we commit after being saved to be cleansed by the Lord's blood.

Gaining The Lord's Abiding

If we live in the fellowship of the Lord's life, we abide in the Lord. When we abide in the Lord, we gain the Lord's abiding in us. When the Lord abides in us, He becomes our life, power, joy, peace, and all the riches of His life in our practical experience. Therefore, gaining the Lord's abiding in us to be our all, is also a result of living in the fellowship of life.

Bearing Much Fruit To Glorify God

As the branch abides in the vine with no barrier between itself and the vine and thus receives the supply of rich sap bears much fruit, so also we who abide in the Lord and fellowship with the Lord receive the supply of the Lord's

life and bear much fruit. Therefore, the fruits of our spiritual life are borne by abiding in the Lord and fellowshipping with Him.

When we bear much spiritual fruit of life, God is glorified because His life is expressed. However, if we want to bear much spiritual fruit of life, we must abide in the Lord and fellowship with Him. Thus, bearing much spiritual fruit of life to glorify God and express His life is also a result of the fellowship of life. (Lsn. 22)

THE BREAKING OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

When we live in the divine light, we are under its enlightenment, and it exposes, according to God's divine nature and through God's nature in us, all our sins, trespasses, failures, and defects, which contradicts His pure light, perfect love, absolute holiness, and excelling righteousness. At such a time we sense in our enlightened conscience the need of cleansing of the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus, and it cleanses us in our conscience from all sins that our fellowship with God and with one another may be maintained. Our relationship with God is unbreakable, yet our fellowship with Him can be interrupted. The former is of life, whereas the latter is based on our living, though it also is of life. One is unconditional; the other is conditional. Our fellowship, which is conditional, needs to be maintained by the constant cleansing of the Lord's blood. (First John 1:7 note 3)

THE RECOVERY OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE— THROUGH CONFESSING OUR SINS

Thank God! Although our life fellowship with Him can be broken, it can also be recovered. Since it is broken by sinning, it must be recovered through confessing our sins. If we are willing to confess our sins to God according to the Lord's enlightening, He is faithful and righteous according to His Word to forgive and cleanse our sins because of the Lord's blood. Thus, our fellowship with Him in life can be recovered. The moment we confess our sins to God, He immediately forgives and cleanses us so that our conscience has peace and does not condemn us. Thus our fellowship in life with Him is recovered. This is just like the child who took the candy and ate it. As soon as he tells his

mother he's sorry, she'll forgive him and his fellowship with his mother will be recovered. We can recover our broken fellowship with God at any time. This recovery is based on the eternal efficacy of the Lord's precious blood and is accomplished through the confession of our sins. (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 2, Ch. 22)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SENSE OF LIFE AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

1. **Once a believer neglects the sense of life, he immediately loses the fellowship of life. The fellowship of life is maintained in the sense of life. Once we neglect the sense of life, the fellowship of life is broken and lost.**
2. **Once a believer loses the fellowship of life, the sense of life becomes dulled. The fellowship of life is maintained through the sense of life, and the sense of life is sharpened by the fellowship of life. Thus, once the fellowship of life is lost, the sense of life is dulled.**
3. **Once a believer obeys the slight remaining sense of life, the fellowship of life is recovered. The reason we lose the fellowship of life is because we don't obey the sense of life. Therefore, if we obey the slight remaining sense of life, we immediately recover the fellowship of life.**
4. **Once a believer recovers the fellowship of life, the sense of life becomes sharp again. The reason the sense of life becomes dulled is because we lose the fellowship of life. Since we have recovered the fellowship the fellowship of life, the sense of life is spontaneously sharpened.**
5. **The sharper the sense of life in a believer is, the deeper the fellowship that that believer has is. The deeper the fellowship of life, the sharper the sense of life. These two have a mutual cause and effect relationship. They make a continuous cycle that causes the believers to grow in life. The sense of life requires us to have fellowship of life; the fellowship of life increases our sense of life. The more we have the sense of life, the more fellowship of life we have. The more fellowship of life we have, the more we have the**

sense of life. As these two move in an ever-increasing cycle, the Lord's life within us grows. (Ch. 22)

QUESTIONS

1. What are the source and meaning of the fellowship of life?

2. According to the Bible, what are the two aspects of the fellowship of life?

3. According to the Bible, what is the medium of the fellowship of life?

4. What are the responsibilities of the believers to the fellowship of life?

5. What are the results of the fellowship of life?

6. How can we restore and maintain the fellowship of life when it is interrupted?

LESSON SEVENTEEN

DEALING WITH THE CONSCIENCE

Scripture Reading:

Rom. 2:14-15 For when Gentiles, who have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these, though they have no law, are a law to themselves, Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness with it and their reasoning, one with the other, accusing or even excusing them.

Heb. 9:14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

1Tim. 3:9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

Hymn: 309

OUTLINE

I. The source and the position of the conscience:

A. Man's conscience was created by God at the time that He created man—Gen. 2:7.

Gen. 2:7 Jehovah God formed man with the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

B. After the fall of man, the function of the conscience was developed and manifested—Gen. 3:7.

Gen. 3:7 And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

C. The conscience is one of the functions of man's spirit (the organ with which man uses to contact God)—Rom. 9:1.

Rom. 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit.

II. The functions of the conscience:

A. At the time of man's fall, man's conscience began to bear the

responsibility of choosing good and rejecting evil—Gen. 3:6-7.

Gen. 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make oneself wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.

Gen. 3:7 And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

B. Man's conscience enables man to know what God justifies and what He condemns, what God loves and what He hates—Rom. 2:15.

Rom. 2:15 Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness with it and their reasonings, one with the other, accusing or even excusing them.)

C. The function of the conscience is to represent God in ruling over man according to the nature that has the law of God created by God in the human heart—Rom. 2:14-15.

Rom. 2:14 For when Gentiles, who have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these, though they have no law, are a law to themselves,

Rom. 2:15 Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness with it and their reasonings, one with the other, accusing or even excusing them.)

D. The feelings of the conscience was cast aside as men fell deeper into sin—Titus 1:15; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; Eph. 4:19.

Titus 1:15 All things are pure to the pure; yet to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.

1 Tim. 4:1 But the Spirit says expressly that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons

1 Tim. 4:2 By means of the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, of men who are branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron.

Eph. 4:19 Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness.

E. When a man is saved and is regenerated, the Holy Spirit entered into his human spirit to enliven his human spirit causing the feeling of the conscience to be recovered and to be more sensitive—John 3:6; Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:12-13.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the

Spirit is spirit.

Eph. 2:5 Even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)

Col. 2:12 Buried together with Him in baptism, in which also you were raised together with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Col. 2:13 And you, though dead in your offenses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our offenses.

III. Dealing with the conscience:

A. The basis—the blood of Christ—Heb. 9:14.

Heb. 9:14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

B. The object—the conscience itself is not the object of dealing, but the feelings of the conscience—Eph. 4:19.

Eph. 4:19 Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness.

C. Three categories of feelings:

1. Feeling toward sin—Psa. 51; Matt. 5:23-25.

Psa. 51 To the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba

Psa. 51:1 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; / According to the greatness of Your compassions blot out my transgressions.

Psa. 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, / And from my sin cleanse me.

Psa. 51:3 For I do know my transgressions, / And my sin is before me continually.

Psa. 51:4 Against You and You alone have I sinned, / And I have done what is evil in Your sight. / Therefore You are righteous when You speak; / You are clear when You judge.

Psa. 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, / And in sin did my mother conceive me.

Psa. 51:6 Behold, You delight in truth in the inward parts; / And in the hidden part You would make known wisdom to me.

Psa. 51:7 Purge my sin with hyssop, and I will be clean; / Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Psa. 51:8 Let me hear gladness and joy, / That the bones which You have broken

may exult.

Psa. 51:9 Hide Your face from my sins, / And blot out all my iniquities.

Psa. 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, / And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psa. 51:11 Do not cast me from Your presence, / And do not take the Spirit of Your holiness away from me.

Psa. 51:12 Restore to me the gladness of Your salvation, / And sustain me with a willing spirit.

Psa. 51:13 I will teach transgressors Your ways, / And sinners will turn back to You.

Psa. 51:14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation; / And my tongue will ring forth Your righteousness.

Psa. 51:15 O Lord, open my lips, / And my mouth will declare Your praise.

Psa. 51:16 For You do not delight in sacrifice; / Otherwise I would offer it; / You take no pleasure in burnt offerings.

Psa. 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; / A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

Psa. 51:18 Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion; / Build the walls of Jerusalem.

Psa. 51:19 Then You will delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, / In burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; / Then they will offer bulls upon Your altar.

Matt. 5:23 Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you,

Matt. 5:24 Leave your gift there before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Matt. 5:25 Be well disposed quickly toward your opponent at law, while you are with him on the way, lest the opponent deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

2. Feeling toward the world—1 John 2:15-17.

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him;

1 John 2:16 Because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.

1 John 2:17 And the world is passing away, and its lust, but he who does the will of God abides forever.

3. All the other uneasy feelings—Eph. 4:18-19.

Eph. 4:18 Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance which is in them, because of the hardness of

their heart;

Eph. 4:19 Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness in greediness.

D. The extent of dealing with the conscience—life and peace—Rom. 8:6b.

Rom. 8:6b But the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

IV. The result of dealing with the conscience:

A. Conducting oneself in all good conscience before God, which is a great return to God—Acts 23:1, note 3.

Acts 23:1[3] After man's fall and his being sent out of the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23), God in His dispensation wanted man to be responsible to his own conscience. But man failed to live and walk according to his conscience and fell further into wickedness (Gen. 6:5). After the judgment of the flood, God ordained that man should be under human government (Gen. 9:6). Man failed in this also. Then, before fulfilling His promise to Abraham concerning the blessing of the nations in his seed, Christ (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8), God put man under the test of the law (Rom. 3:20; 5:20). Man failed this test utterly. All these failures indicate that man has fallen from God to his conscience, from his conscience to human government, and from human government to lawlessness; that is, man has fallen to the uttermost. Hence, to conduct oneself in all good conscience before God, as Paul did, was a great return to God from man's fall. Paul spoke this word to vindicate himself before those who accused him of being a lawless and even reckless person. In his defense he referred again to his conscience in 24:16. This showed his high standard of morality, in contrast to the hypocrisy of the Jewish religionists and the crookedness of the Roman (Gentile) politicians. See notes 121 in this chapter, 21, 241, 261, and 273 in ch. 24, and 91 and 132 in ch. 25.

B. Holding faith and a good conscience, that we may be safeguarded from being shipwrecked regarding our faith—1 Tim. 1:19, notes 1-3.

1 Tim. 1:19[1] Faith and a good conscience go together. Whenever there is an offense in our conscience, there will be a leakage, and our faith will leak away. A good conscience accompanying faith is needed for warring the good warfare against the different teachings in a troubled local church.

1 Tim. 1:19[2] This show the seriousness of thrusting away faith and a good conscience. To hold faith and a good conscience is a safeguard for our Christian faith and life. The word shipwrecked implies that the

Christian life and the church life are like a ship sailing on a stormy sea, needing to be safeguarded by faith and a good conscience.

1 Tim. 1:19[3] The faith here is objective, referring to the things in which we believe (see note 23[2] in Gal. 1), whereas faith at the beginning of this verse is subjective, referring to the act of our believing.

C. A conscience purified from any mixture, to hold the mystery of the faith—1 Tim. 3:9, note 1; 2 Tim. 1:3.

1 Tim. 3:9[1] The faith here, as in 1:19 and 2 Tim. 4:7, is objective, referring to the things we believe in, the things that constitute the gospel. The mystery of the faith is mainly Christ as the mystery of God (Col. 2:2) and the church as the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4). A deacon in a local church should hold the mystery of the faith with full understanding in a pure conscience for the Lord's testimony.

1 Tim. 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

D. Purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God—Heb. 9:14, note 3.

Heb. 9:14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Heb. 9:14[3] The blood of Christ purifies our conscience to serve the living God. To serve the living God requires a blood-purified conscience. To worship in dead religion or to serve any dead thing, anything that is outside God, does not require our conscience to be purified. The conscience is the leading part of our spirit. The living God whom we desire to serve always comes to our spirit (John 4:24) by touching our conscience. He is righteous, holy, and living. Our defiled conscience needs to be purified that we may serve Him in a living way. To worship God in our mind in a religious way does not require this.

E. Come forward with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience—Heb. 10:22.

Heb. 10:22 Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

F. For we are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring in all things to conduct ourselves honorably—Heb. 13:18.

Heb. 13:18 Pray for us, for we are persuaded that we have a good conscience,

desiring in all things to conduct ourselves honorably.

G. For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience—2 Cor. 1:12.

2 Cor. 1:12 For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in singleness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and more abundantly toward you.

REFERENCE

The Experience in Life, Ch. 6; The Pure in Heart, Ch. 6.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

A Christian who wants to grow in life must do three things: first, thoroughly confess his sins before God; second, carefully deal with his sins before man; and third, consecrate himself to God absolutely. If the saints are willing to take these three things to the Lord and practice them in a serious way, they surely will have progress in life. However, if they only take these words as doctrines, they will not receive much help from them. These words are only guidelines; only when the saints seriously walk the way of the Lord will these words be profitable to them. The experience of these three matters—confessing our sins to God, confessing our mistakes to man, and consecrating ourselves absolutely to God—may vary in sequence. These three matters are like a threefold cord, and no one who takes the Lord's way can neglect them.

Moreover, after a Christian has thoroughly confessed his sins, carefully dealt with them, and consecrated himself to God, he also has to deal with his conscience. This is the necessary pathway for a Christian to take. After we confess our sins before God, deal with our sins before man, and consecrate ourselves to God, we will immediately have a feeling deep within us. This feeling is not merely a realization in our mind, but a feeling in the depths of our being that we have to deal with our conscience and obtain peace in our

conscience. Therefore, it is extremely important to know the origin, the position, and the function of the conscience.

THE ORIGIN, POSITION, AND FUNCTION OF THE CONSCIENCE

In simple words, the conscience comes from God. People who know God should know that before the fall of Adam, man lived before God and had no need of the conscience. For example, when we are in the sunlight during the day, there is no need of a lamp or any other kind of light. Only those who are not facing the sun have the need of a light. The need of the conscience arose as a result of the fall, when man left the face of God. In the beginning man lived before God, who can be likened to the sun. Originally man received light directly from the face of God. Although candlelight is weak, it is not without function; when the sun has set, the candlelight starts to function. It is the same with the function of the conscience. When man was living before God and had the light of God, the conscience was not used and the function of the conscience was not expressed because man had no need of it before God. We see from human history that man fell not long after he was created. He fell from light into darkness. After the fall there was a distance, a barrier, between God and man. At the point the Bible shows us that God took the definite step to activate the function of man's conscience. This may be likened to lighting a lamp when the sky is getting dark. We have to bear in mind that the function of the conscience was activated after man's fall.

The position of the conscience is to represent, or we can say, stand in the place of, God inside of man. Thus, although living according to the conscience is good, it is not the highest condition. The highest condition is that man would live before God directly. Why do we need a lamp? We need a lamp because the sky is dark. Why do we need the conscience? We need the conscience because man is fallen. Since man fell and left the face of God, God was forced to use the conscience as His representative in enlightening man. Human history can be divided into several dispensations. The first dispensation is called the dispensation of innocence; it is the time when man received direct ruling from God. After the fall the second dispensation, the dispensation of conscience, began. At that time man had both sin and a

conscience within him. Although man had fallen into the darkness of sin, God still preserved a conscience, a lamp, for man. The conscience of man was still able to enlighten man and manifest its function. This was how the conscience was activated.

Man's fall was not a partial fall but a complete fall, and a continual fall. Man did not stay under the ruling of the conscience but he continued to fall. How did man fall further? We see from human history that man's fall into sin was progressive. First, man fell into the conscience, and it was the conscience which enlightened and ruled over man. Yet man was not able to stand firm under the ruling of the conscience, and so from there he fell again. After the first step of man's fall, man had the conscience within him which represented God to rule over man. Yet man ignored his conscience in everything he did and fell again. At this time the dispensation of law began, and man started to be penalized of the disobeyed the laws of the nation. At this juncture man had fallen to the uttermost. (Pure in Heart, pp. 59-61)

After man's fall and his being sent out of the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23), God in His dispensation wanted man to be responsible to his own conscience. But man failed to live and walk according to his conscience and fell further into wickedness (Gen. 6:5). After the judgment of the flood, God ordained that man should be under human government (Gen. 9:6). Man failed in this also. Then, before fulfilling His promise to Abraham concerning the blessing of the nations in his seed, Christ (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8), God put man under the test of the law (Rom. 3:20; 5:20). Man failed this test utterly. All these failures indicate that man has fallen from God to his conscience, from his conscience to human government, and from human government to lawlessness; that is, man has fallen to the uttermost. Hence, to conduct oneself in all good conscience before God, as Paul did, was a great return to God from man's fall. (The New Testament Recovery Version, Acts 23:1, note 3, pp. 576-577)

When we are saved and regenerated, the Holy Spirit enters into us and quickens our spirit, giving us a new spirit (Ezek. 36:26). At this time, the three functions of our spirit are recovered. We can freely fellowship with God, directly know His will, and keenly differentiate between right and wrong. Therefore, the functions of the spirit today are not the same as they were after

the fall, neither are they similar to their condition before the fall. Today all three functions are present at the same time: moreover, all are strong and keen. (The Experience of life, p. 96)

DEALING WITH THE CONSCIENCE

Every saved one has to deal with his conscience. If he does not deal with his conscience, he will not have peace within. If he does not deal with his conscience, he will not be able to pray properly. If he does not deal with his conscience, his Bible reading will be tasteless and his gospel preaching will be powerless. If he does not deal with his conscience, he will not be able to walk the pathway ahead of him. All the saved ones have to pass through this stage of dealing with their conscience if they want to go further on the way. Our conscience is like a window and our being is like a room; the light that the room (our being) receives must pass through the window (our conscience). Originally, there is no light inside of us but only darkness, but our conscience is like a window which allows the light to come in.

Before we are saved, our conscience is like an extremely dirty window smudged with putty through which no light can penetrate. This results in a state of complete darkness in our being. However, once we are saved, the Holy Spirit enters into us to enlighten us, causing our inner being to be full of light. At this time, we immediately feel that we are wrong. Then we should repent and confess our sins before God, and we should deal with our sins before man. Every time we confess or deal with a sin, we wipe the putty-covered window once. The wonderful thing is that before we wipe the window, we do not know how dirty it is; so the more we wipe it, the dirtier it seems to become. Once we wipe the window even slightly, all the greasy dirt is stirred up. Then when the sunlight shines through the window, it seems even dirtier than before. However, in the end, the window will be clean.

It is the same with our conscience. When we were first saved, we may have thought that we had committed only a few small mistakes before God, but after we began to confess these mistakes, we immediately saw many greater sins. Eventually, the more we deal with our sins, the fewer sins we have. This is like wiping a window: The more we wipe it, the less greasy dirt it has. As a

result of this process, we have peace within, and spontaneously we can easily pray to God. When the rain splashes mud or sand onto a dirty window, we can hardly see anything inside the house; however, after the window has been cleaned, when a little bit of sand or mud is splashed onto the window, we will notice it immediately. Many people have done something wrong yet never sense that they are wrong. This proves that they have never dealt with their conscience. (Pure in Heart, pp. 67-68)

The Basis of Dealing with the Conscience— the Blood of Christ

The blood of Christ purifies our conscience to serve the living God. To serve the living God requires a blood-purified conscience. To worship in dead religion or to serve any dead thing, anything that is outside God, does not require our conscience to be purified. The conscience is the leading part of our spirit. The living God whom we desire to serve always comes to our spirit (John 4:24) by touching our conscience. He is righteous, holy, and living. Our defiled conscience needs to be purified that we may serve Him in a living way. To worship God in our mind in a religious way does not require this. (The New Testament Recovery Version, Heb. 9:14, note 3, p. 1062)

The Object of Dealing with the Conscience

It is not the conscience itself, but rather the feeling of the conscience that is the object of our dealings. Besides the premature feelings, over-sensitive feelings, and the feelings of Satan's accusations and attacks, all normal feelings of the conscience are the object of our dealings. (The Experience of life, pp. 120, 121)

Throughout generations, all saints who have been seeking life agree that the conscience is the window of our spirit just as the eye is the window of our body. The window itself has no light; all light is transmitted from another source. So also is the conscience. Although we dare not say that the conscience itself has no feeling at all, we can say that the greater portion of its feelings comes from its neighboring parts. There are a total of seven of these neighboring parts: the mind, the emotion, the will, the intuition, the

fellowship, the life of God, and the Spirit of God. All of these seven neighboring parts have feelings. When their feelings penetrate into the conscience, they become the feeling of the conscience. This is the origin of the feeling of the conscience. (p. 103)

Dealing with the Three Categories of Feelings of the Conscience

The feelings of the conscience of the saints are of many aspects. One who has a keen conscience will have the feelings of the conscience in all matters. These feelings of the conscience can be divided into three categories: First is the feeling toward sin. In the chapter concerning dealing with sin we have said that the basis of dealing with sin is the inner consciousness. This inner consciousness is the feeling of the conscience. If we sin before God or before man, the conscience will immediately have the feeling of condemnation. This is the first category of the feelings of the conscience.

The second category is the feeling toward the world. In the chapter concerning dealing with the world we have said that the basis for dealing with the world is also the inner consciousness. This inner consciousness is still the feeling of the conscience. If we love other matters or are occupied with anything outside of God, the conscience will also give us a feeling of condemnation. This is the second category of the feelings of the conscience.

Beside these two categories of the feelings of the conscience, there is a third category: these are the uneasy feelings concerning anything apart from sin and the world. There are certain matters that are neither sinful nor of the world, yet they cause our conscience to lose the feeling of peace. If we do not deal with these matters, we simply cannot get through. For example, looseness and inaccuracy in our daily living are not sin nor of the world, yet our conscience is disturbed by them. If someone scatters clothing and other articles around, leaving the room in a state of disorder, his conscience will rebuke him. If our character has certain shortcomings or peculiarities, if our behavior toward others is unbecoming as a Christian, or if before God we have certain undesirable or unsuitable attitudes, though they are neither sinful nor

worldly, our conscience is bothered. All these uneasy feelings belong to the third category of the feelings of the conscience. (pp. 103-104)

The Extent of Our Dealing with the Conscience

The extent of our dealing with the conscience is the same as that of dealing with sin and the world—"life and peace." We must deal to such an extent that we sense not only peace within, but also life. Not only do we need to feel restful, secure, and assured, but we must also feel strengthened, enlightened, and satisfied. Anything short of life and peace means that our dealings are not thorough enough.

However, in our experience, the sense of life and peace cannot always be maintained without change. On the contrary, after a period of time, we may again feel empty and confused, uneasy and insecure, as if the sense of life and peace were gone. Two factors are responsible for this condition. One is our carelessness and failure, which has caused us to become contaminated again and possessed of things not pleasing to God. Another is that the standard of God's inward demand of life is greatly uplifted when we continue to submit to our conscience, receive the supply of grace, grow in life, and increase with the enlightening of the Holy Spirit. These two reasons can cause us to feel neither life nor peace.

At first, this kind of feeling is a vague feeling within us that we lack life. In other words, we no longer feel "life." Whenever we sense a lack of life, we must realize that God has a deeper lesson within for us to learn and additional matters without for us to deal with. If at this time we enter more deeply into His presence, seeking more revealing light, God will go a step further and show us what matters need to be dealt with. When the light on the matter becomes clear, our vague feeling concerning the lack of life becomes a definite feeling of unrest. This feeling is a feeling in the conscience. We ought to deal accordingly with this feeling until we have recovered the inward condition of life and peace. Such cycles of repeated dealings will purge us again and again and take us forward in the way of life. (p. 123)

THE RESULT OF DEALING WITH THE CONSCIENCE

In Acts 24:16 Paul said, “Because of this I also exercise myself to always have a conscience without offense toward God and men.” A conscience without offense is one that is without holes or leakage. If we confess our sins before God and deal with our sins before man, our inner being will be without sins and our conscience will be pure. We can serve God only with a pure conscience. If we want our service to touch God, we have to serve with a pure conscience. If our conscience is not pure, not only will our prayers not be answered, but they will never touch God. Some people’s conscience is like a wrecked ship. Although some have forsaken their conscience, those who are saved should not overlook even a small mistake; rather, we should deal with it thoroughly. We do not need to encourage people to be enthusiastic, because enthusiasm in blindness does not profit anything. If we want to follow God in life to walk on the way ahead of us, we must follow Him and fulfill His principles. If we want to serve and touch God, we must always have the presence of God within us, and we must be full of light and have faith all the time. In his way, light, revelation, life, and power will become our constant experiences. As long as we thoroughly deal with our conscience, we will be able to walk on this path in a straight and proper way. (Pure in Heart, pp. 69-70)

QUESTIONS

1. Please explain the source and position of the conscience according to the Bible.

2. Please explain briefly the function of the conscience.

3. How should we deal with our conscience?

4. What is the result of dealing with our conscience?

LESSON EIGHTEEN

CALLING UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD

Scripture Reading:

Isa. 12:3 Therefore you will draw water with rejoicing / From the springs of salvation,

Isa. 12:4a And you will say in that day, / Give thanks to Jehovah; call upon His name!…

Rom. 10:12b …For the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;"

Rom. 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Lam. 3:55 I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, From the lowest pit.

Lam. 3:56 You have heard my voice; do not hide Your ear at my breathing, at my cry.

Hymn: #291

OUTLINE

I. The meaning of calling on the name of the Lord:

A. The Greek word for call on is composed of on and call (by name); thus, it is to call out audibly, even loudly, it is to call out a person's name audibly.

B. The accurate meaning of calling on the name of the Lord is to call out audibly "Lord Jesus, O Lord Jesus"; it is also to call out to the Lord, and to experience spiritual breathing—Lam. 3:55-56; Hymn #255.

Lam. 3:55 I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, From the lowest pit.

Lam. 3:56 You have heard my voice; do not hide Your ear at my breathing, at my cry.

C. By calling on the name of the Lord, we receive the Spirit—Acts 2:21, note 2.

Acts 2:21[2] The name denotes the person. Jesus is the Lord's name, and the Spirit is His person. When we call "Lord Jesus," we receive the Spirit.

D. Calling on the name of the Lord is the way to enjoy the Lord.

II. The history of calling on the name of the Lord—Acts 2:21, note 1:

Acts 2:21[1] Calling on the name of the Lord is not a new practice that began with the New Testament. Rather, it began with Enosh, the third generation of mankind, in Gen. 4:26. It was continued by Job (Job 12:4; 27:10), Abraham (Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 21:33), Isaac (Gen. 26:25), Moses and the children of Israel (Deut. 4:7), Samson (Judg. 15:18; 16:28), Samuel (1 Sam. 12:18; Psa. 99:6), David (2 Sam. 22:4, 7; 1 Chron. 16:8; 21:26; Psa. 14:4; 17:6; 18:3, 6; 31:17; 55:16; 86:5, 7; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17; 118:5; 145:18), the psalmist Asaph (Psa. 80:18), the psalmist Heman (Psa. 88:9), Elijah (1 Kings 18:24), Isaiah (Isa. 12:4), Jeremiah (Lam. 3:55, 57), and others (Psa. 99:6), all of whom practiced this in the Old Testament age. Isaiah charged the seekers of God to call upon Him (Isa. 55:6). Even the Gentiles knew that the prophets of Israel had the habit of calling on the name of God (Jonah 1:6; 2 Kings 5:11). The Gentile raised up by God from the north also called upon His name (Isa. 41:25). It is God's commandment (Psa. 50:15; Jer. 29:12) and desire (Psa. 91:15; Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 13:9) that His people call on Him. This is the joyful way to drink from the fountain of God's salvation (Isa. 12:3-4) and the enjoyable way to delight oneself in God (Job 27:10), that is, to enjoy Him. Hence, God's people must call upon Him daily (Psa. 88:9). Such a jubilant practice was prophesied by Joel (Joel 2:32) concerning the New Testament jubilee.

In the New Testament, calling on the name of the Lord was first mentioned by Peter, here, on the day of Pentecost, as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. This fulfillment is related to God's outpouring of the all-inclusive Spirit economically upon His chosen people that they may participate in His New Testament jubilee. Joel's prophecy and its fulfillment concerning God's New Testament jubilee have two aspects: on God's side, He poured out His Spirit in the ascension of the resurrected Christ; on our side, we call on the name of the ascended Lord, who has accomplished all, attained unto all, and obtained all. Calling on the Lord's name is vitally necessary in order for us, the believers in Christ, to participate in and enjoy the all-inclusive Christ with all He has accomplished, attained, and obtained (1 Cor. 1:2). It is a major practice in God's New Testament economy that enables us to enjoy the processed Triune God for our full salvation (Rom. 10:10- 13). The early believers practiced this everywhere (1 Cor. 1:2), and to the unbelievers, especially the persecutors, it became a popular sign of Christ's believers (9:14, 21). When Stephen suffered persecution, he practiced this (7:59), and his practice surely impressed Saul, one of his persecutors (7:58- 60; 22:20). Later, the unbelieving Saul persecuted the callers (9:14, 21) by taking their calling as a sign. Immediately

after Saul was caught by the Lord, Ananias, who brought Saul into the fellowship of the Body of Christ, charged him to be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord, to show others that he too had become such a caller. By his word to Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:22, Paul indicated that in the early days all the Lord's seekers practiced such calling. Undoubtedly, he was one who practiced this, since he charged his young co-worker Timothy to do this that Timothy might enjoy the Lord as he did.

The Greek word for call on is composed of on and call (by name); thus, it is to call out audibly, even loudly, as Stephen did (7:59-60).

A. The Old Testament saints.

B. The New Testament saints.

III. The purpose of calling on the name of the Lord:

A. To be saved—Rom. 10:13.

Rom. 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

B. To be saved from distress, calamity, trouble, and sorrow—Psalms 18:6; 118:5; 50:15; 86:7; 81:7; 116:3-4.

Psa. 18:6 In my distress I called upon Jehovah And cried out to my God. He heard my voice from His temple, And my cry before Him came to His ears.

Psa. 118:5 Out of my distress I called upon Jehovah; Jehovah answered me and set me in a place broad and free.

Psa. 50:15 And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you will glorify Me.

Psa. 86:7 In the day of my distress I call upon You, For You answer me.

Psa. 81:7 You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you from the secret place of thunder; I proved you at the waters of Meribah.

Psa. 116:3 The bonds of death encompassed me, And the distresses of Sheol fell upon me; I fell upon trouble and sorrow.

Psa. 116:4 But I called upon the name of Jehovah. O Jehovah, I pray, deliver my soul.

C. To partake of the Lord's mercy—Psalms 86:5.

Psa. 86:5 For You, O Lord, are good and ready to forgive And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.

D. To partake of the Lord's salvation—Psalms 116:2, 4, 13, 17.

Psa. 116:2 Because He inclines His ear to me; Therefore I will call upon Him all my days.

Psa. 116:4 But I called upon the name of Jehovah. O Jehovah, I pray, deliver my

soul.

Psa. 116:13 I will take up the cup of salvation And call upon the name of Jehovah.

Psa. 116:17 To You I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And I will call upon the name of Jehovah.

E. To receive the Holy Spirit—Acts 2:17, 21.

Acts 2:17 And it shall be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream things in dreams.

Acts 2:21 And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

F. To drink the spiritual drink, and eat the spiritual food for satisfaction—Isa. 55:1.

Isa. 55:1 Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, And you who have no money; Come, buy and eat; Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

G. To enjoy the Lord's riches—Rom. 10:12.

Rom. 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;

H. To stir oneself up—Isa. 64:7.

Isa. 64:7 And there is no one who calls upon Your name, Who stirs himself up to lay hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us And have consumed us by our iniquities.

IV. The practice of calling on the name of the Lord:

A. Call on the Lord out of a pure heart—2 Tim. 2:22.

2 Tim. 2:22 But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

B. Call on the Lord with a pure lip—Zeph. 3:9.

Zeph. 3:9 For then I will change the language of the peoples into a pure language That they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, To serve Him with one accord.

C. Call on the Lord with an open mouth—Psa. 81:10,7.

Psa. 81:10 I am Jehovah your God, Who brought you up out of the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

Psa. 81:7 You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you from the

secret place of thunder; I proved you at the waters of Meribah.

D. Call on the Lord corporately—2 Tim. 2:22.

2 Tim. 2:22 But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

E. Call on the Lord daily and moment by moment—Psa. 88:9.

Psa. 88:9 My eye wastes away at the affliction; I have called out to You, O Jehovah, every day; I have spread out my hands to You.

F. Call on the Lord as long as we live—Psa. 116:2.

Psa. 116:2 Because He inclines His ear to me; Therefore I will call upon Him all my days.

V. Build up a life of calling on the name of the Lord

We must practice and build up a habit of calling on the name of the Lord, in our daily living, practical matters, prayer, Bible reading, thanksgiving, praising, meetings, gospel preaching, so that calling on the Lord may become our living.

REFERENCE

Life-study of Genesis, Msg. 25; The Lord's Recovery of Eating, Chs. 3, 4; Footnotes from the New Testament Recovery Version.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE MEANING OF CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

Firstly, we need to learn the meaning of calling on the name of the Lord. Some Christians think that calling on the Lord is the same as praying to Him. Formerly, I held the same concept. One day, however, the Lord showed me that calling on His name is different from merely praying. Yes, calling is a type of prayer, for it is a part of our prayer, but calling is not merely praying. The Hebrew word for call means to "call out to," "to cry unto," that is, to cry out. The Greek word for call means "to invoke a person," "to call a person by

name." In other words, it is to call a person by naming him audibly. Although prayer may be silent, calling must be audible.

To call on the Lord also means to cry to Him and to experience spiritual breathing. "I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry" (Lam. 3:55-56). These verses indicate that calling is also crying and breathing. Crying is the best breathing....Whenever you cry out, you breathe spontaneously and deeply. By crying and breathing we both exhale and inhale. Inhaling always follows exhaling.

By exhaling we breathe out all the negative things. Whenever you breathe out the negative things, the positive things of the Lord will fill you up.... By calling on His name all the sinful, evil, and unclean things will be breathed out, and all the positive things—the riches of the Lord will be breathed into you. (Life-study of Genesis, Msg. 25, pp. 334-335)

There is one matter that is very important, yet it is not clear to many Christians. It concerns two things: the name of the Lord and the Spirit of the Lord. The name of the Lord is Jesus, and the Spirit of the Lord is the Lord Himself, the person of the Lord. Everyone has a name, and every name denotes a person, who is the person himself. If there were no such person but only a name, then that name would equal nothing. Jesus is the name of the Lord, and the Spirit is the person of the Lord. When I call the Lord's name, the Spit comes. Brothers and sisters, do you think that the Lord Jesus is merely an empty name? The Lord Jesus is real; therefore, when you call, He comes, and the One who comes is the Spirit. Do not think that calling upon the name of the Lord is a small matter; you cannot call upon the name of the Lord Jesus without any result. When you call, "O Lord Jesus!", He comes. (The Lord's Recovery of Eating, p. 21)

We can often use physical things as illustrations of spiritual matters. To enjoy the Lord in our spirit is like breathing the air physically. Just as your body takes in fresh air by breathing, so also your spirit inhales the Lord when you call on His name. I believe that all of us have had this experience. Whenever we truly open to the Lord and call on His name, we have the sense of the Lord's presence within us. The more you call, the more you receive the

supply of the Lord; the more you call, the more you are watered by Him; the more you call, the more you are filled with Him. The Lord is the Lord of all! When the Lord comes into us, whatever we need, He is. He is all that we need, and He supplies all of our needs.

Lamentations 3:55 says, "I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, / From the lowest pit." When your wife gives you trouble at home, you get into a low pit. At such a time praying is of no avail; you need to call. If you call out loud a few times when you are pressed, you will be able to break through and rise above your feeling. Often your calling on the Lord's name is for the demons to hear so that they can be driven off. When you are about to lose your temper, you have no time to pray, but you can quickly call on the Lord. Calling on the Lord is the best way to chase away the temper-losing demon and the trouble-making demon.

THE HISTORY OF CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

Calling on the name of the Lord is not a new practice that began with the New Testament. Rather, it began with Enosh, the third generation of mankind, in Gen. 4:26. It was continued by Job (Job 12:4; 27:10), Abraham (Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 21:33), Isaac (Gen 26:25), Moses and the children of Israel (Deut. 4:7), Samson (Judg. 15:18; 16:28), Samuel (1 Sam. 12:18; Psa. 99:6), David (2 Sam. 22:4, 7; 1 Chron. 16:8; 21:26; Psa. 14:4; 17:6; 18:3, 6; 31:17; 55:16; 86:5, 7; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17; 118:5; 145:18), the psalmist Asaph (Psa. 80:18), the psalmist Heman (Psa. 88:9), Elijah (1 Kings 18:24), Isaiah (Isa. 12:4), Jeremiah (Lam. 3:55, 57), and others (Psa. 99:6), all of whom practiced this in the Old Testament age. Isaiah charged the seekers of God to call upon Him (Isa. 55:6). Even the Gentiles knew that the prophets of Israel had the habit of calling on the name of God (Jonah 1:6; 2 Kings 5:11). The Gentile raised up by God from the north also called upon His name (Isa. 41:25). It is God's commandment (Psa. 50:15; Jer. 29:12) and desire :15; Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 13:9) that His people call on Him. This is the joyful way to drink from the fountain of God's salvation (Isa. 12:3-4) and the enjoyable way to delight oneself in God (Job 27:10), that is, to enjoy Him. Hence, God's people must call upon

Him daily (Psa. 88:9). Such a jubilant practice was prophesied by Joel (Joel 2:32) concerning the New Testament jubilee.

In the New Testament, calling on the name of the Lord was first mentioned by Peter, here, on the day of Pentecost, as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. This fulfillment is related to God's outpouring of the all-inclusive Spirit economically upon His chosen people that they may participate in His New Testament jubilee. Joel's prophecy and its fulfillment concerning God's New Testament jubilee have two aspects: on God's side, He poured out His Spirit in the ascension of the resurrected Christ; on our side, we call on the name of the ascended Lord, who has accomplished all, attained unto all, and obtained all. Calling on the Lord's name is vitally necessary in order for us, the believers in Christ, to participate in and enjoy the all-inclusive Christ with all He has accomplished, attained, and obtained (1 Cor. 1:2). It is a major practice in God's New Testament economy that enables us to enjoy the processed Triune God for our full salvation (Rom. 10:10-13). The early believers practiced this everywhere (1 Cor. 1:2), and to the unbelievers, especially the persecutors, it became a popular sign of Christ's believers (9:14, 21). When Stephen suffered persecution, he practiced this (7:59), and his practice surely impressed Saul, one of his persecutors (7:58-60; 22:20). Later, the unbelieving Saul persecuted the callers (9:14, 21) by taking their calling as a sign. Immediately after Saul was caught by the Lord, Ananias, who brought Saul into the fellowship of the Body of Christ, charged him to be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord, to show others that he too had become such a caller. By his word to Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:22, Paul indicated that in the early days all the Lord's seekers practiced such calling. Undoubtedly, he was one who practiced this, since he charged his young co-worker Timothy to do this that Timothy might enjoy the Lord as he did. (The New Testament Recovery Version, Acts 2:21, note 1, pp. 482-483)

By all of these verses we can see that in the first century the Christians practiced calling on the name of the Lord very much. Therefore, throughout the Old Testament as well as in the early days of the Christian age, the saints called on the Lord's name. How regrettable that it has been neglected by most Christians for so long a time. We believe that today the Lord wants to recover

calling on His name and to have us practice it so that we may enjoy the riches of His life. (Life-study of Genesis, Msg. 25)

THE PURPOSE OF CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

To be Saved

Why do we need to call on the name of the Lord? Men need to call on the name of the Lord in order to be saved (Rom. 10:13). Suppose a particular person hears the gospel and begins to believe in the Lord. You can help him to be saved by having him pray to the Lord in a very quiet way, and I have seen many persons saved in this manner. However, if you would not only help him to pray, but also to call upon the name of the Lord, his experience of salvation would be much stronger. The first way, the way of praying quietly, does help people to be saved, but not so richly. The second way, the way of calling loudly, helps people to be saved in a richer and more thorough way. Thus, we need to encourage people to open themselves and to call the name of the Lord Jesus.

To Be Rescued from Distress, Trouble, Sorrow, and Pain

Another reason for calling on the Lord is to be rescued from distress (Psa. 18:6; 118:5), from trouble (Psa. 50:15; 86:7; 81:7), and from sorrow and pain (Psa. 116:3-4). People who have argued about calling on the Lord found themselves calling on Him when they were subject to a certain trouble or illness. When our lives are free from trouble, we will argue about calling on the Lord. However, when trouble comes, there will be no need for anyone to tell you to call on Him. You will call spontaneously. Calling on the Lord rescues us and delivers us. We need to call on the Lord when in distress and trouble. Furthermore, Psalm 116:3-4 tells us that calling on the name of the Lord rescues us from many negative things such as pain, sorrow, death, and hell. If you want to be delivered from such things, you need to call on the Lord.

To Participate in the Lord's Mercy

Psalm 86:5 says that the Lord is good, ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon Him. The way for us to participate in the Lord's plenteous mercy is to call upon Him. The more we call upon Him, the more we enjoy His mercy.

To Partake of the Lord's Salvation

Psalm 116 also tells us that we may partake of the Lord's salvation by calling on Him. "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord" (v. 13). In this one psalm calling on the Lord is mentioned four times (vv. 2, 4, 13, 17). The calling here is for the purpose of partaking of the Lord's salvation. As we have seen earlier, the way to draw water out of the wells of salvation is to call upon the name of the Lord (Isa. 12:2-4).

To Receive the Spirit

Another reason for calling on the Lord is to receive the Spirit (Acts 2:17, 21). The best and easiest way to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. The Spirit has already been poured out. We simply need to receive Him by calling on the Lord. We can do it anytime. If you call on the name of the Lord several times, you will be filled with the Spirit.

To Drink the Spiritual Water and to Eat the Spiritual Food for Satisfaction

Isaiah 55:1 says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." What is the way to eat and drink the Lord? Isaiah gives us the way in verse 6 of the same chapter: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Thus, the way to drink the spiritual water and to eat the spiritual food for our satisfaction is to seek the Lord and to call upon His name.

To Enjoy the Riches of the Lord

Romans 10:12 says that the Lord of all is rich to all who call upon Him. The Lord is rich and rich to all who call upon Him. The way to enjoy the riches of the Lord is to call upon Him. The Lord is not only rich, but also nigh and

available as mentioned in verse 8 of the same chapter because He is the life-giving Spirit. As the Spirit, He is omnipresent. At any time and in any place we may call on His name. When we call on Him, He comes to us as the Spirit, and we enjoy His riches. When you call on Jesus, the Spirit comes.

To Stir Up Ourselves

By calling on the name of the Lord we can stir up ourselves. Isaiah 64:7 says, "And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." When we feel that we are down or low, we can lift and stir ourselves up by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 341-344)

THE PRACTICE OF CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

How should we call on the Lord? We must call on Him out of a pure heart (2 Tim 2:22). Our heart, which is the source of our calling, must be pure, seeking nothing except the Lord Himself. Also, we must call with a pure lip (Zeph. 3:9). We need to watch our speech, for nothing contaminates our lips more than loose talk. If our lips are impure due to loose talk, it will be difficult for us to call on the Lord. Along with a pure heart and pure lips, we need to have an open mouth (Psa. 81:10). We need to open our mouth wide to call on the Lord. Furthermore, we need to call on the Lord corporately. Second Timothy 2:22 says, "But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." We need to come together for the purpose of calling on the name of the Lord.

Psalm 88:9 says, "Lord, I have called daily upon thee." Hence, we should call daily upon His name. This matter of calling on the name of the Lord is not a doctrine. It is very practical. We need to practice it daily and hourly. We should never stop breathing. We all know what happens when breathing ceases. Furthermore, Psalm 116:2 says, "Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." As long as we live, we should call on the name of the Lord. I hope that many more of the Lord's people, especially the new ones, will begin this

practice of calling on the Lord. If you do it, you will see that it is the best way to enjoy the Lord's riches. (p. 344)

BUILDING UP A LIFE OF CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

We have already seen clearly that eating the Lord is the way to enjoy the Lord. Eating the Lord, which is a spiritual expression, is really calling on the Lord. Calling on the Lord is our way to enjoy the Lord. ...There is another matter to which many can testify. When you preach the gospel to someone, the best way is to help him open his mouth to call on the Lord. ...When others call on the Lord with you, their spirit is unconsciously opened to the Lord. When their spirit is opened, the Lord, who is the living Spirit, enters into their spirit, and they are saved. Many brothers and sisters can testify to the fact that the quickest and most effective way to preach the gospel is to help people call on the Lord Jesus. ...Furthermore, the Bible shows us that when we are offering sacrifices to God, that is, when we are giving thanks to God, we must also call on the Lord. Whenever your heart is touched by the Lord's grace and you give thanks to the Lord, you must call on the Lord from deep within. The thing that most glorifies the Lord and gives Him the utmost thanks and praises is our calling on the Lord. ...

Therefore, brothers and sisters, you must learn to call on the Lord, and you also must learn to mingle your calling on the Lord with your pray-reading of the Word. If you practice these two ways every day, your entire being will be saturated with the Lord. For the Lord to operate in us, we must learn to call on the Lord until this becomes a natural habit in our living. ...In the first century all the proper Christians lived a life of calling on the Lord's name. I do not doubt at all that they called on the Lord every day. They called on the Lord at home, and they called on the Lord while walking on the street. I hope that all of you also will build up such a practice. (The Lord's Recovery of Eating, pp. 25-31)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of calling on the name of the Lord?
2. Please explain briefly the history of calling on the name of the Lord.
3. What is the purpose of calling on the name of the Lord?
4. How do we practice a living of calling on the name of the Lord?

LESSON NINETEEN

PRAY-READING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 6:17-18 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

Jer. 15:16 Your words were found and I ate them, and your word became to me the gladness and joy of my heart, for I am called by Your name, O Jehovah, God of hosts.

Psa. 119:103 How sweet are Your words to my taste! Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Hymn: 811

OUTLINE

I. Knowing the essence of God's word:

A. God's word is the breathing out of God—2 Tim. 3:16.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

B. The Bible is the spiritual milk—1 Pet. 2:2.

1 Pet. 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation,

C. God's word is our spiritual food, our bread of life—Matt. 4:4.

Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."

D. God's word is spirit and life—John 6:63.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

E. God's word is Christ—God Himself—John 1:1, 14.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the

Word was God.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

II. The meaning and function of pray-reading the Lord's word:

A. "And receive…the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit…"—Eph. 6:17-18.

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,

Eph. 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints.

B. Using our spirit to pray-read God's word to enjoy the Lord by eating, drinking, and breathing the spirit and life in God's word—Eph. 6:17; Jer. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:2; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16.

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God.

Jer. 15:16 Your words were found and I ate them, And Your word became to me The gladness and joy of my heart, For I am called by Your name, O Jehovah, God of hosts.

1 Pet. 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

III. The exercise and practice of pray-reading God's word.

A. Personal pray-reading:

1. Hungering for the Lord; hoping in God's word.

2. Praying with the spirit; touching the spirit in the word.

3. Not relying on our mind; according to the Spirit.

4. Daily, morning and evening; eat, drink, and enjoy.

B. Four words for corporate pray-reading:

1. Quick: Follow quickly; connect quickly; add to quickly. Do not fight—fighting causes confusion. Do not wait—waiting results in depression.

2. **Short: Short sentences pick up the spirit—masticating not swallowing.**
3. **Real: Release the spirit by forsaking the self. The feeling is real when it is expressed from deep within.**
4. **Fresh: Following the Spirit to express fresh feelings. Do not try to be funny.**

REFERENCE

The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, Chs. 1, 2; How to Enjoy the Spiritual Food (in Chinese), Ch. 2, 4 to 6; A Living of Mutual Abiding with the Lord in Spirit, Chs. 6, 7; The Proper Way for the Believers to Meet and to Serve, Ch. 3; The God-ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy, Ch. 8; Life-study of Ephesians, Msg. 97.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

KNOWING THE ESSENCE OF GOD'S WORD

Now let us see the essence of God's Word in a simple way. If we want to know God's Word, we must know the essence of God's Word. The Word of God is the Bible. Its essence is:

(1) God's Word is God's breathing out (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible is God's breathing out; that is, it is the breath breathed out by God. The Bible is God's breathing. To God it is a matter of breathing out; to us it is a matter of breathing in. Through God's breathing out and our breathing in, God's word enters into us and becomes our life and life supply. Therefore, when we read the Bible, we must understand that the Bible is not merely black words on white paper, but it is the breathing out of God. It is full of spiritual breath. Therefore, we must not only understand the Bible with our mind, but we also must contact the word of the Bible with our spirit. Whenever we read the Bible we come to contact God.

(2) The Bible is the spiritual milk. In 1 Peter 2:2 Peter said that we need to be like newborn babes desiring the guileless milk of the Word. In the Word of

God there is the element of milk. This is also implied in Hebrews 5:12, which says, "You...have become those who have need of milk and not of solid food." God's Word is our spiritual breath; therefore, we must breathe it in. God's Word is also our milk; hence, we must drink it. We must desire the guileless milk of the Word.

(3) God's Word is our bread of life, our food of life. This is indicated in Matthew 4:4, a word out of the Lord's mouth and a quote of Deuteronomy 8:3: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God." Therefore, whenever we read the Bible, we must breathe in the spiritual air, that is, the Spirit of God. We also must drink the spiritual milk and eat the bread of life, which is the Lord Himself.

(4) The Word of the Lord is spirit and life. In John 6:63 the Lord Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life."

(5) The Word is God. The consummation of the Word is Christ Himself, because Christ is the Word of God. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God." This Word became flesh, and His name is Jesus Christ. Ultimately, the word in the Bible is God Himself. It is the embodiment of God Himself. This does not mean that we consider the words in black and white as the living God. What we mean is that the words in black and white contain God Himself. This God is Christ; He is our bread of life. This Christ is also the Spirit, who becomes our spiritual milk and our spiritual breath. (The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, pp. 16,17)

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF PRAY-READING GOD'S WORD

The Meaning of Pray-reading God's Word

In Greek, the antecedent of "which" in verse 17 is the Spirit, not the sword. This indicates that the Spirit is the word of God. Both the Spirit and the word are Christ (2 Cor. 3:17; Rev. 9:13). We need to receive the word of God by means of all prayer and petition. According to verses 17 and 18, we are to take the word of God by means of all prayer. These verses indicate that we may take the word by pray-reading, that is, by praying with the words of Scripture

and over them, using the words of the Bible as our prayer to God. The term pray-reading is not found in the Bible. However, the fact of pray-reading is according to the Scripture. (Life-Study of Ephesians, Msg. 97, p. 817)

We also need to pray-read the word (Eph. 6:17-18). Pray-reading was a term invented by us to describe the practice of reading the word of God by prayer and with prayer. Our spiritual dictionary has been broadened to include this word. When something is invented in a culture, there is the need of a new word. The unabridged dictionaries are much larger than they were fifty years ago. Language goes along with culture. Now that we have been transferred into the kingdom of God, we have a spiritual culture, a Christian culture. We need the term of pray-reading to match the reality in our Christian culture.

Many saints pray-read throughout church history, but they did not have the term pray-reading. Many of us pray-read the word without any realization of what we were doing. After we got saved, we may have read a verse that was so inspiring and pleasing to us. Spontaneously, we repeated it in the way of praying. Andrew Murray was one among many saints who turned God's word into prayer (see 'Lord... Thou Saidst', pp. 66-67, published by Living Stream Ministry). Many saints throughout church history pointed out that the best way to understand the word is to read it prayerfully.

To read the word with prayer and by prayer, to pray-read the word, is the best way to read the word. Mere reading only needs our eyes and our understanding, our mentality. But to receive God's word into the depths of our being, our spirit is needed, and the prevailing way to exercise our spirit is by praying. Whenever we pray, we spontaneously exercise our spirit. Then what we read with our eyes and understand in our mentality will go into our spirit through our prayer. Every word in the Bible needs our pray-reading. (The God-ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy, pp. 79-80)

Pray-reading the Word of God with Our Spirit

We need to pray-read, converting all that we see and all that we comprehend into prayer. When we pray, we use our spirit. At first, we may use our mind to pray, but after three to five sentences our spirit will rise up.

This is a definite fact. Therefore, never forget that the essence of the Word of God is God's breathing out. When you read it, you should breathe it in. On God's side, it is a matter of His breathing out; on our side, it is a matter of our breathing in. The spiritual breath comes out of Him and enters into us. That which comes out of Him and enters into us is the spiritual breath. The Word of God is spirit and life. Our mind cannot touch the Spirit; only our spirit can touch the Spirit. If we do not touch the Spirit, we do not have life. Only by touching the Spirit can we have life. Ultimately, this life is Christ, and it is also God Himself. At first, we do not need to explain what we read, nor do we need to understand it; we only need to pray-read the Word literally. When we pray-read, our spirit touches the Spirit of the Bible, and thus we receive life. (The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, p. 23)

Eating, Drinking, and Breathing in the Spirit and Life in God's Word

The matter of pray-reading to eat, drink, and breathe the Spirit and the life in the Word of God is seen in the word of the Bible; hence, pray-reading is not superstitious. When we pray-read, the word in letters becomes spirit and life, that is, the Lord Himself. To pray-read is to receive "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition" (Eph. 6:17-18). Whenever we receive the Word of God by pray-reading, the result is that we eat, drink, and breathe in the Spirit and the life in God's Word. Even an Old Testament saint, Jeremiah, also said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them" (Jer. 15:16). The Word of God is edible; hence, it is our food. Therefore, we must "long for the guileless milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2). In addition, God's Word is also God's breathing out. When we breathe in God's Word, breathing in what God has breathed out, we receive Him. It is clear, then, that to pray-read is to eat, to drink, and to breathe, and the more consistently we practice it, the better. (p. 24)

THE EXERCISE AND PRACTICE OF PRAY-READING THE LORD'S WORD

Personal pray-reading

Now we have to see what is the proper way to receive God's word. We must read Ephesians 6:17 and 18.... According to these verses, what is the way for us to receive God's word? It is by means of all prayer and petition. This is what we said by pray-reading. We must receive God's word by means of all prayer.

Whether in the morning or in the evening, we have to pray-read a few verses in God's word. Do not need to exercise your mind to "squeeze" out some words or think what you have read. You simply pray what you read. You can have some living prayers on every page, every verse. You do not need to close your eyes to pray-read. When you pray, you gaze on the word of God.... We must realize that when we pray, we do not necessarily close our eyes. It is even better if we can close our mind....

We do not need any organized phrases or a manufactured prayer. Simply pray-read the word of God. Based on what you read, pray with the word of the Scriptures. At the end, you will see that the entire Bible is a prayer book! You can pray over any page, any portion of the Bible....Perhaps you are very familiar with the whole book of Romans. But even today, you still need to pray-read one or two verse from Romans. We may know everything about food, but we still need to eat it. No matter how much we know, we still need to eat. It is one thing to know, but it is another thing to eat and enjoy. You may have been a Christian for years, but no matter how long you have been a Christian or how many times you have read a certain book, you not only have to read it but to pray-read it. You must eat it, take it, and enjoy it.

Pray-Reading with the Saints

In order to have more enjoyment and nourishing from God's word and have an adequate amount of pray-reading, we need the Body, the church. We may enjoy pray-reading by ourselves, but if we try to pray-read with a group of Christians, we will be in the third heaven. This is because the food is for the whole Body and not merely for an individual member. Hence, the best way to pray-read the Word is to be with other members in the Body. You can also be benefited by your personal pray-reading, but once you pray-read with other brothers and sister, you will see the difference.

The Four Keys to Pray-Reading

When we pray-read with other brothers and sisters, we have to remember four words: fast, short, genuine, and new. First, our prayer has to be fast, not hesitating. Once we pray fast, we will not have the time to consider with our mind. Second, our prayer has to be short because long prayers require composing. We have to forget about organizing a long prayer, but we need to say only a short sentence or a phrase. Third, we also need to be genuine without pretense. Say it in a genuine way. Lastly, our prayer has to be fresh and not old. For us to have fresh prayers, the best way is not to use our own words, instead, pray with the words of the Bible. Every part, every line of the entire Bible can be used in our prayers; this is the freshest prayer!

Over tens of thousands of people have proved that this is the best way to read the Bible. This method has caused them to have a revolutionary change in their life. As long as you are willing to practice with a sincere heart, you will touch the living Spirit! If you try pray-reading both personally and corporately, you will be able to testify that the riches of Christ has dispensed into you through pray-reading the word of God. You will receive the blessing and growth in your spiritual life, and you will experience a great change. Through pray-reading the word of God, you enjoy Christ and receive His nourishing, and you will grow unto maturity, fill with life, and be saturated with the eternal one. (How to Enjoy the Spiritual Food, pp. 9-13 in Chinese)

QUESTIONS

1. Please explain according to the Bible the reason we should practice pray-reading God's word.

2. How does one practice pray-reading God's word personally?

3. How can we practice pray-reading God's word corporately?

LESSON TWENTY

PRAYER

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

Col. 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving,

Phil. 4:6 In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Hymn: 784

OUTLINE

I. The meaning of prayer:

A. Prayer is the mutual contact between man and God. It is the flowing between man and God.

B. Prayer is man breathing God, obtaining God, and being obtained by God.

C. Prayer is man cooperating and co-working with God, allowing God to express Himself through man and thus accomplish His purpose—Rom. 8:26-27; James 5:17.

Rom. 8:26 Moreover, in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Rom. 8:27 But He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to God.

James 5:17 Elijah was a man of like feeling with us, and he earnestly prayed that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

II. Prayer and the denial of the self—Mark 8:34; 9:29:

Mark 8:34 And He called the crowd to Him with His disciples and said to them, If

anyone wants to follow after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Mark 9:29 And He said to them, This kind cannot come out by any means except prayer.

A. To pray means that we realize that we are nothing and that we can do nothing.

B. To pray is to really deny the self, "No longer I, but Christ"—Mark 9:29; Gal. 2:20.

Mark 8:34 And He called the crowd to Him with His disciples and said to them, If anyone wants to follow after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

III. Prayer and the release of the Spirit—Eph. 6:18; John 4:24; 1 Cor. 6:17:

Eph. 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

1 Cor. 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

A. We need to learn how to exercise, stir up, and release our spirit.

B. We need to exercise our spirit to release the Holy Spirit.

C. When the Holy Spirit is released, we can participate in the outpouring of the Spirit of power.

IV. Prayer and vitality:

A. Prayer makes us vital.

B. To be vital means to be released in our spirit.

C. There is no other way to be vital except by prayer.

V. Persevering in prayer—Col. 4:2; Acts 2:42; Eph. 6:18:

Col. 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Eph. 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and

watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints.

A. If we would preserve the grace we have received from the Lord, we need to persevere in prayer.

B. We need to persevere in prayer because prayer involves a battle.

C. Before we try to persevere in prayer, we should first make a deal with the Lord concerning prayer, offering ourselves to Him to have a proper prayer life.

D. We should set aside certain times each day for prayer.

REFERENCE

Lessons on prayer, Ch. 1; Life-Study of Mark, Msg. 27; Fellowship concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, Chs. 10 to 14, 22 to 23; Life-Study of Colossians, Msgs. 30, 65.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE MEANING OF PRAYER

Please remember, a real prayer is the mutual contact between God and man. Prayer is not just man contacting God, but also God contacting man. If in prayer man does not touch or contact God, and God does not touch or contact man, that prayer is below the proper standard. Every prayer that is up to the standard is one which is a mutual flow and contact between God and man. God and man are just like electric currents flowing into one another. It is hard for you to say that prayer is solely God in man or solely man in God. According to the fact and experience, prayer is the flowing between God and man. Every prayer that is truly up to the standard surely will have a condition of mutual flowing between God and man so that man may actually touch God and God may actually touch man; thus, man is united with God, and God with man. Therefore, the highest and most accurate meaning of prayer is that it is the mutual contact between God and man.

A real prayer is also man breathing in God just as he breathes in air. While you are thus breathing in God, spontaneously you are obtaining God, just as when you breathe in air you receive air. Consequently, not only is God obtained by you and becomes your enjoyment, but also your whole being surrenders to God, turns to God, and is wholly gained by God. The more you pray, the more you will be filled with God, and the more you will surrender yourself to God and be gained by Him. If you do not pray for a week or, even worse, a month, then you will be quite far from God. What does it mean to be quite far from God? It means that you cannot obtain God and be obtained by Him. The only remedy for this situation is to pray. And it is not enough to pray for only two or three minutes; you must pray again and again until you have actually breathed God and are actually obtained by God, and God by you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, real prayer is of great importance to a Christian's spiritual life. (Lessons on prayer, pp. 15-16)

By these illustrations we can see that real prayers will certainly cause our being to be wholly mingled with God. We will become a person of two parties, i.e. God mingled with man. When you pray it is He praying, and when He prays it is also you praying. When He prays within you, then you express the prayer outwardly. He and you are altogether one, inside and outside; He and you both pray at the same time. At that time you and God cannot be separated, being mingled as one. Consequently, you not only cooperate with God but also work together with God that God Himself and His desire may be expressed through you; thus ultimately accomplishing God's purpose. This is the real prayer which is required of us in the Bible. (p. 20)

PRAYER AND THE DENIAL OF THE SELF

Do you know what it means to pray? To pray means that we realize that we are nothing and that we can do nothing. This implies that prayer is the real denial of the self. To pray, therefore, is to deny ourselves, knowing that we are noting and are not able to do anything. Furthermore, to pray is actually to declare, "Not I, but Christ." [Gal. 2:20]

I wish to emphasize the fact that the word "prayer" in [Mark] 9:29 actually indicates "no longer I, but Christ." Concerning this matter, we need to

understand why this case immediately follows the revelation of Christ as our replacement and the Lord's word about denying ourselves. We need to deny ourselves so that Christ may be our replacement and become everything to us.

Although the disciples saw this revelation, they did not practice it or live according to it. To see the revelation is one thing; but to live it is another. (Life-Study of Mark, pp. 240-241)

PRAYING AND THE RELEASE OF THE SPIRIT

Prayer is the release of the spirit. If you do not release your spirit, you can never receive the Spirit. This may be likened to a water hose. When water is coming out of the hose, this means that water is coming into it. Thus, to release our spirit is to receive the Spirit. (Fellowship concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, p. 101)

The proper prayer always releases us. If we pray and our spirit is not exercised and released, our prayer is wrong. Prayer must exercise our spirit and release our spirit. When our spirit is released by our prayer, we are released persons. (p. 109)

We should remember two things. First, when we pray, we need to petition, to supplicate, not to explain. Second, when we pray, we should pray by and in our spirit. Paul said in Ephesians 6:18 that we should pray at every time in spirit. A number of translations translated "spirit" in this verse with a capital "S." But the spirit here is not the Spirit with a capital "S," but our spirit. We need to pray at every time in spirit, and watch unto this kind of prayer in our spirit. If we pray without being in the spirit, we have to adjust ourselves. When we pray, we must pray from our spirit. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit (John 4:24). Whenever we come to the Lord, we must exercise our spirit. (p. 115)

When we come together to meet, our whole being with our spirit should be living....A meeting full of the exercise of the spirit and the release of the spirit is the real church meeting....We should be exercising our spirit and releasing our spirit all the time, even when we are not praying aloud....Therefore, we all have to learn how to exercise our spirit, how to stir up our spirit, and how to release our spirit....The release of the Spirit leads us to the outpouring of the

Spirit. We need to pray by exercising our spirit for the release of the Holy Spirit....Today the key is not with the Holy Spirit. The key is with us. (pp. 118-119)

The key to make you living is for you to pray, and to pray mainly is to exercise your spirit. When you teach the Lord in your prayer, when you explain to Him, and when you describe a lot in your prayer, there is no impact because that kind of prayer is not the unlocking of the Spirit. We should pray, "Lord, I want to be living. Give me the impact, Lord." (p. 126.)

BECOMING A VITAL PERSON THROUGH PRAYER

We need to remember that our groups must be vital groups. The Bible talks about vital people. What is an overcomer? An overcomer is a vital person. Then what is it to be vital so that we can be overcomers? A vital person, an overcomer, is a praying person. You must have the real burden for the real prayer....The vitality is not in your doing. The vitality is in your prayer. ...We must have some vital prayer with some vital burden....If you have this kind of prayer with a burden, every time you pray you will get the Spirit. You will get the infilling Spirit and the outpoured Spirit. (pp. 221, 222)

If we do not pray even for one day, we have the feeling that we are short of the Spirit. When we pray, even with just a few sentences, we have the feeling that we are touching the Spirit. We all need to have a time with the Lord every morning in prayer. If you do not pray in the morning for one week, you will be dead spiritually. There is no other way to be vital except by prayer. We have to pray and get into a prayer life.

Most of us are living in a situation in which it is difficult to find a solid time of half an hour to pray. Whenever we set aside a definite time to pray, the enemy will always try to disturb us. When we begin to pray, someone may knock on our door or call us on the telephone. We may not have any telephone calls for a long period of time, but as soon as we begin to pray, the telephone will ring. Eventually, after three phone calls, our heart for prayer may be gone. We may have to wait for a period of time until we can be recovered back to prayer. It is not easy for us to pray for half an hour without being disturbed. We need to look to the Lord so that we can free ourselves

from all distractions to have solid times of prayer with Him. Prayer makes us vital. We have to take the lead to be vital. If we are not vital, we cannot pray for others to be vital.

To be vital means to be released in the spirit, and this cannot be performed. If we pray for half an hour, we will be released. If we are not released, we are not vital. To contact people we have to be released persons. If we are not bound, we will be able to release others. A dejected, weeping person cannot make other people happy. If we are going to make people happy, we have to be happy persons. We can only help people to be what we are. In order to go out to effectively labor in the gospel, we must be vital. (pp. 205-206)

CONTINUE STEADFASTLY IN PRAYER

When some saints hear a word about prayer, they immediately ask how to pray. We should forget about how and simply pray. For example, a child learns to walk by walking. Few parents teach their children to walk. In the same principle, we learn to pray by praying.

In 4:2 Paul charges us to persevere in prayer. This means that we should not merely continue in prayer, but we should strive to continue. Almost everything in our environment is contrary to prayer. In order to pray, we must go against the tide, the current, of our environment. If we fail to pray, we shall be swept downstream. Only prayer can enable us to go against the current. Therefore, we need to persevere in prayer, to pray persistently.

Day by day we need to exercise ourselves to pray. We should even set aside certain times each day for prayer. Do not excuse yourself by saying that you do not have the burden to pray. Pray even when you seem to have no burden, or when apparently you have nothing to say to the Lord. ...But when you go to the Lord in prayer even without a burden, telling Him that you have nothing to say, you will find yourself refreshed in the Lord and able to pray genuinely. When we open to the Lord and admit that we do not know what to say to Him, we breathe in fresh spiritual air, and we are preserved in the Lord's grace. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 253-254)

Before you try to persevere in prayer, you should first make a deal with the Lord concerning your prayer life. Pray to Him in a definite way and say, "Lord,

I mean business with You about this matter of prayer. I call heaven and earth to witness that from this time forth I will have a life of prayer. I will not be a prayerless person. Rather, I will be a praying person." ...We need to say to Him, "Lord, I am desperate about this. I offer myself to You so that I may have a prayer life. Lord, keep me in the spirit of prayer. If I forget this or neglect this, I know that You will not forget it. Remind me again and again about prayer." This kind of prayer may be regarded as a vow made to the Lord. We all need to make a vow to Him concerning our prayer life. We should tell the Lord, "Lord, I know that if I forget this vow, You will not forget it. From the very beginning, Lord, I want to clearly hand the responsibility over to You. Lord, don't let me go. Remind me to pray."

After we make such a deal with the Lord concerning prayer, we should set aside definite times for prayer. For instance, you may reserve ten minutes every morning. During this time, prayer must be the top priority. Our attitude should be that prayer is our most important business and that nothing should be allowed to interfere with it. If we do not have this attitude, we shall not be able to have a successful prayer life. No matter how many things we have to do each day, we can reserve at least a few minutes here and there for prayer. We may pray a little in the morning. Then again at noon, after work, and in the evening we may have other times for prayer. By setting aside definite times during the day, we may be able to have a half hour reserved for prayer. (pp. 581, 582)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the real meaning of prayer?

2. What is the relationship between prayer and the release of the spirit?

3. How to become a vital person?

4. Why do we need to continue steadfastly in prayer? Please list your daily prayer time.

LESSON TWENTY-ONE

SINGING HYMNS

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 5:18-19 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit, Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord,

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

Hymn: 1141

OUTLINE

I. Knowing the hymns:

A. The progression of the hymns in the Lord's recovery.

B. Three basic requirements for the hymns:

1. Having basis in the truth.

2. Having the style and structure of a poem.

3. Having spiritual reality and feeling.

C. The categories and the crucial points of the content of the hymns.

D. The standard, feeling, wording, and tune of the hymns.

II. The practice of singing hymns:

A. The objects to whom we sing:

1. To God—Psa. 51.

2. To man—Psa. 37, 133.

3. To oneself—Psa. 103, 121.

4. To angels and the surrounding demons—hymn # 890.

5. To one another—Col. 3:16.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and

admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

B. We should exercise our spirit by singing hymns to be filled by the Holy Spirit.

C. We should recite the lyric of the hymns to overflow in praises.

D. We should learn to speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs—1 Cor. 14:26; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-19.

1 Cor. 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

Eph. 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,

Eph. 5:19 Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord.

III. The four major elements of the New Testament meetings—the word, the Spirit, singing, prayer.

A. The center—the Holy Spirit.

B. The key and principle—everyone speaking and listening to one another—1 Cor. 14:26, 31; Heb. 10:25.

1 Cor. 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

1 Cor. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

Heb. 10:25 Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.

C. The four major elements—the word, the Spirit, singing, and prayer.

REFERENCE

Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 1, Lsn. 15; Words of Training for the New Way, Msg. 8, 16, 18, 22; The Divine Speaking, Ch. 2; The God-Ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy, Msgs. 7 to 9; The Exercise and Practice of the God-Ordained Way, Msgs. 15, 30; Meeting to Speak the Word of God, Msg. 3; Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church, Chs. 6, 9; Speaking Christ for the Building Up of the Body of Christ, Msg. 7; Vessels Useful to the Lord, Msg. 1.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

KNOWING THE HYMNS

The Development of Hymns in the Lord's Recovery

I would like to speak briefly concerning our hymnal. The first stage began over sixty years ago when we were raised up by the Lord. The hymnals used by Christianity at that time were not suitable for the saints' use in the Lord's recovery. We read of the hymnals published by the Brethren during their golden age. Brother Nee borrowed the table of contents of their hymnals as the basic structure for ours and added two more topics related to the spiritual warfare and the subjective experience of the cross. These were compiled into a hymnal. This hymnal begins with praises to the Father for our worship of the Father. There was also the appreciation of the Lord for our remembrance of the Lord. This rendered great help to the bread-breaking meetings. At that time, our hymnal only had one hundred eighty-three hymns and we used it until we came to Taiwan. In 1949, the young people's work began in Taiwan. We felt that the one hundred eighty-three hymns were not adequate, so we published a second volume of our hymnal. By 1961, we began to see God's economy. I wrote eighty-five hymns which became the so-called "Supplement of 85 Hymns." They were all related to God's economy and included such hymns as "Thou Art All My Life, Lord," "O Glorious Christ, Savior Mine," and "The Spirit Begets the Spirit, The Spirit Worships the Spirit" [not available in English"]. In 1967, after I finished the compilation of the English hymnal in America, I returned to Taiwan and combined the two volumes of the Chinese hymnal, the "Supplement of 85 Hymns," and the gospel songs into a single

volume. In addition, I added two hundred more hymns. The result is the Chinese hymnal that we are using today. (Words of Training for the New Way, pp. 100-101)

Three Basic Requirements for the Hymns

First, the words of a hymn must be based on the truth. Many hymns meet the other two requirements but contain errors in truth. If we ask God's children to sing these hymns, we are leading them into error. We are putting human errors into their hand when they go before the Lord; we are ushering them into an improper sentiment. When God's children sing hymns, their feelings are directed toward God. If the hymns have wrong doctrines, they will be cheated in their feelings and will not touch reality. God does not meet us according to the poetic sentiment of the hymn; He meets us according to the truth conveyed in the hymn. We can only come before God in truth. If we do not come to God in truth, we are in error and will not touch reality.

Second, accurate doctrines alone do not constitute a hymn. A hymn needs to be poetic in its form and structure. Truth alone is not sufficient. After there is the truth, there is still the need for poetry in form and structure. Only when there is poetry is a hymn like a hymn. Singing is not preaching. We cannot sing a message. There was one hymn which began with the words: "The true God created the heavens, the earth, and man." This may be something good for preaching, but this is not singing. This is a doctrine, not a hymn. All the songs in the book of Psalms are poetry. Every psalm is fine and tender in form and expression and utters God's mind in the way of poetry. Merely having every line follow a certain meter does not constitute a hymn. The structure must be poetic, and the form must be poetic.

Third, in addition to the truth and poetic structure and form, a hymn needs to provide spiritual impact. It must touch spiritual reality. For example, Psalm 51 is a psalm of repentance by David. In reading it, we find David's repentance doctrinally correct, his words carefully chosen, and the structure of the psalm intricate. But more than that, we feel something within the words; there is a spiritual reality, a spiritual feeling, within the psalm. We can call this the burden of the hymn. David repented, and the feeling of his

repentance permeates the whole psalm. Many times in reading the book of Psalms, there is something we are struck with—every sentiment expressed in these psalms is genuine. When the psalmist rejoiced, he jumped up and shouted for joy. When he was sad, he wept. These psalms are not empty words void of reality. There is spiritual reality behind the words. (Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 1, pp. 228-231.)

We all know that poems and songs are the crystal, the essence of literature. When a person's literary cultivation reaches the peak, he will produce poems and songs. Moreover, poems and songs are based on one's experience of life and are the works produced out of one's personal feeling.... To learn to write hymns, we must possess three qualifications: the knowledge of the truth, the experience of life, and the literary profundity. (Vessels useful to the Lord, Ch. 1)

The Categories of the Hymns and the Key Points of the Content

Our hymns were written not according to our own ideas but according to the truths in the Bible. To explain the biblical truths is not an easy matter. To express the truths in poems and lyrics requires even the more that we have a thorough understanding of the truths. If we desire to study and pursue the profound truths in the Bible, we must do it by using our hymnal along with the Bible and by being assisted by the life-studies and spiritual books. Sometimes even one line of a hymn is full of the riches of the truth.

I compiled our present hymnal in 1966. You cannot find a hymnal in Christianity that is like our hymnal, which is so full of truths in its contents. The table of contents alone occupies five pages, pointing out the sequence of the truths, so that by reading it, one can easily receive light. The study of this hymnal alone is the study of the highest theology in the Lord's recovery. To study the table of contents of our hymnal until we thoroughly understand it and find the basis of the biblical truth of each hymn would require at least four years. Our spiritual books and life-studies are the expressions of the truths in written words, and hymns are the conversion of the words into poems and lyrics. To compose hymns is to reach the peak, to arrive at the

ultimate point, of the study of the truth.... I hope that we all can earnestly study the truths contained in our hymns. (The Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church, pp. 135-136)

It is not easy to select a proper hymn. The English hymnal that we compiled has 1,080 hymns of which more than two hundred were written by us. The remaining eight hundred or so hymns were collected from among more than ten thousand hymns. We can say that the best of the hymns written throughout the centuries, including certain Pentecostal hymns, are almost entirely included in our hymnal. The table of contents at the beginning of our hymnal shows that our knowledge of the truth is very inclusive. ...We had a focus and an emphasis, and we did not cut ourselves off from any truth. Today there is no other collection of hymns like ours that includes all the major truths. When we put out our English hymnal, an elderly American sister, who had spent many years in China, read the table of contents and told us that it was very precious because all aspects of the truth were included there. We did this because we wanted the brothers and sisters to know that our knowledge of the truth is many-sided, but we still have an emphasis and a focus. This is particularly manifest in the more than two hundred hymns written by us, many of which exclusively concern the Spirit with our spirit and the two spirits becoming one spirit. (pp. 85-86)

The Standard, Sensation, Wording, And Tune Of The Hymns

The singing of hymns in the meetings began with David in the Old Testament. Today the so-called sacred melodies are passed on from David, later, to the Catholic Church, and from there to the Protestant Church. Those who know music should understand that the so-called sacred music—the melodies for hymns are unique and solemn. After World War II, the Americans started to like new things, so they called the sacred music the “Old Times”, abandoned them, and rewrote many new tunes. After thirty years, almost all the new tunes cannot stand firm because they are not weighty enough, so not many of them are valuable. However, there are still some valuable ones among the new tunes, and we have complied them into our hymnal. For example, there is one called, “In the Garden”, which depicts the

conversation and fellowship that the Lord Jesus and Mary the Magdalene had in the garden in the morning of the Lord's resurrection when she met the Lord. More than twenty years ago, when I heard this tune, I used it to write Hymns #501, "O glorious Christ, Savior mine." This is also the tune of our new gospel hymn....This is a good hymn with a solemn tune. (Vessels useful to the Lord, Ch. 1)

THE PRACTICE OF SINGING HYMNS

The Objects To Whom We Sing

To God

The object of this poetry is God. Most of the psalms in the book of Psalms are poetry directed toward God. Psalm 51 is a famous psalm of prayer to God. All hymns of praise, thanksgiving, and prayer are sung to God.

Toward Men

Other psalms are directed toward men. Psalms 37 and 133 are examples of such psalms. This kind of hymn either preaches to men or encourages men Old Testament go to God. All the gospel hymns and hymns of admonition are sung to men.

Colossians 3:16 says, "Teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God." Here we see that psalms and hymns can be used for teaching and admonishing. This is toward men. But at the same time, it involves "singing with grace in your hearts to God." This is also toward God. Therefore, even hymns that are toward men are directed toward God.

In the church there should not be too many hymns directed toward men. In the book of Psalms, this kind of song occupies a small portion. We can have hymns that are directed toward men, but it is not proper to have too many such hymns. When there are too many of this kind of hymn, we lose sight of the main purpose of the hymns. The main goal of the hymns is to direct men toward God.

Toward Oneself

There is still a third kind of hymn in the Bible—those which we sing to ourselves. Many passages in the book of Psalms include the phrase O my soul! All these hymns are directed toward oneself. Psalms 103 and 121 are good examples of such hymns. This kind of hymn is a person's fellowship with his own soul. It is one's counsel with his own heart and his conversation with himself. Everyone who knows God knows the meaning of fellowshipping with his own heart. When a person has fellowship with God, he spontaneously learns how to fellowship with his own heart. At such times, one sings to himself, shouts to himself, addresses himself, and reminds himself. Such hymns often end with a turn to God. A man may begin by fellowshipping with his own heart, but invariably he ends up fellowshipping with God.

To One Another

Both Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 speak of the matter of mutual singing. In mutual singing, after one brother sings, another brother responds by singing. The first brother may sing again, and the other brother responds again. Or several brothers can sing and another group of brothers respond in singing.

There is such a thing as singing one to another in the Bible. Hence, we should sing one to another. We may sing alternately stanza by stanza, between the sisters and the brothers, between one person and the whole congregation, or between different groups. The ones who sit in front can sing alternately to those sitting at the back, or those sitting on the left can sing alternately to those sitting of the right. All these are good ways to sing. (pp. 241-243)

Exercising our Spirit by Singing Hymns to be Filled by the Holy Spirit

You need to exercise your spirit. When you exercise your spirit and use your spirit, the Holy Spirit will fill your spirit. The best way to exercise the spirit is by praying and singing. I encourage you to try it. Keep on praying and keep on singing. The more you pray and the more you sing, the more you exercise

your spirit. The result will be that your spirit will be filled with the Holy Spirit. When you come to the meetings, spontaneously you will speak and sing with psalms and hymns ... I hope that we all can earnestly study the truths contained in our hymns. (Meeting to Speak the Word of God, p. 36)

Speaking Christ with the Hymns

In our home meetings we also need to preach and teach Jesus. We all have to speak! But many of us would not know what to speak. For this reason I would like to present to you the materials for your speaking. In our hymnal we have 1,080 hymns. We collected all the best hymns from the Christian writings. From more than ten thousand hymns we only selected about eight hundred. After the selection, I did my best to classify them into a table of contents for the hymnal. I would ask the young people to study it. This table occupies four and a half pages with thirty categories of hymns. In these thirty categories there are more than four hundred items. Within the category of Experience of Christ there are thirty-two items. These items are the riches of Christ. (Divine Speaking, p. 21)

In Ephesians 5:18-19 Paul says, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled in spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord.” We are to be filled with the Triune God as the all-inclusive, consummated Spirit in our spirit. This filling occurs, not by our speaking in the common, worldly language, but by speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. In our hymnal there are many good hymns full of the truth. Every hymn, especially those written by us, is a good message full of the riches of Christ... We must learn to speak Christ with the hymns. (pp. 23-24)

Our meetings, whether home meetings, small group meetings, or even large meetings, are a matter of speaking the Lord’s word with the spirit. First Corinthians 14:26 says, “Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm...” In our mentality, once a psalm is mentioned, we think about singing. The New Testament, however, shows us that psalms are not primarily for singing, but for speaking. Ephesians 5:18-19 says, “Be filled in spirit, speaking to one another in palms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming

with your heart to the Lord." From this you can see that psalms are primarily for speaking, and then for singing. Also, Colossians 3:16, the sister verse to Ephesians 5:19, says the same thing. It says here that we should teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We have never properly practiced this matter. We have been influenced too deeply by Christianity. This time, regarding the matter of meeting, we have to come back absolutely to the word of the Bible—to teach and admonish one another in psalms. (Words of Training for the New Way, pp. 105-106)

In conclusion, if we are going to have meetings according to the scriptural way, we must know the hymns. We have to know the crucial points of the contents of the hymns, the standard of the hymns, the sensation of the hymns, the wording of the hymns, and the tune of the hymns. We must remember that the hymns are not only for singing, but they also are even more for speaking in the meetings. Our speaking of the proper hymns to one another and our singing of them to the Lord will enrich, enliven, uplift, refresh, and strengthen the meetings. (Speaking Christ, p. 82)

THE FOUR MAJOR FACTORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MEETINGS— THE WORD, THE SPIRIT, SINGING, AND PRAYING

In the New Testament, God's economy has overthrown everything of the Old Testament. God does not want the law to be the center of His people's meetings any longer, but rather He wants His Spirit to be the center. The meetings are not of the letter, but of life; they are not of knowledge, but of reality. Because the New Testament meetings have the Spirit of God as the center, they are of life and of reality. (Words of Training for the New Way, Vol 1, p. 73-74)

The most important item in the new way is the matter of meetings. The problem with the meetings is not whether they are big or small, but whether they have one person speaking with the rest listening or everyone speaking and listening to one another. This is the key to the meetings and also the focus of the problem. ...According to the revelation in the New Testament, the meetings of God's children are also in the principle of mutuality. Even when

the whole church is gathered together, it should be, and must be, in this manner, that is, each one has" (1 Cor. 14:26). You speak, he speaks, I speak, and everyone speaks. Moreover, when one speaks, everyone listens. Everyone is speaking to one another and listening to one another. This is the governing principle of the meetings in God's New Testament economy. (Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 2, p. 42)

When we are filled in spirit, full of the Spirit, the four major factors for our meetings—the word, the Spirit, singing, and praying—will all become useful. These four major factors are related to the Spirit. Without the Spirit, the word is dead. Without the Spirit, the singing and the praying are also dead. All of our singing should overflow from the spirit and be sung from the spirit... At any rate, we must be living persons, filled with the Holy Spirit, in order to be qualified to have Christian meetings. (Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 1, p. 80)

There is another vital point about the meetings as revealed in the New Testament; that is, in these meetings, first, there needs to be the word. Everyone should speak the word of God. Second, there needs to be the Spirit. Everyone should exercise the spirit and be living. Third, there needs to be prayer. Fourth, there needs to be singing. These four items, the word, the Spirit, praying, and singing, should be the content of our meetings. The reason our home meetings and small group meetings are not good is that the word is not spoken properly, the spirit is not released, the prayer is poor, and singing is lacking. If these four matters are not carried out properly, our meetings will be finished, and no one will want to come again. (pp. 71-72)

QUESTIONS

1. Please connect the thought of the categories in the table of contents of the hymnal and explain the key points within.

2. What are the three basic requirements of the hymns? Please use this standard to evaluate hymns number 28 and 41.

3. Please practice to sing hymn # 860 to different persons.

4. In the meetings, how do we practice speaking the hymns? Try to speak on one hymn.

LESSON TWENTY-TWO

PRAISING

Scripture Reading:

Psalm 22:3 But You are holy, You who sit enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

Heb. 13:15 Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name.

Psalm 119:164 Seven times a day I praise You for Your righteous ordinances.

Hymn: 1095

OUTLINE

I. The importance of praising:

A. Praising is the highest work carried out by God's children.

B. Praising is the highest expression of a saint's spiritual life.

C. Praising is the way to overcome spiritual attacks—Psa. 106:47; 2 Chron. 20:20-22; Acts.12:3-12; 16:19-34.

Psa. 106:47 Save us, O Jehovah our God; And gather us out of the nations, That we may give thanks to Your holy name, That we may glory in Your praise.

2 Chron. 20:20 And they rose up early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa. And as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood up and said, Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem. Believe in Jehovah your God, and you will be established; believe in His prophets, and you will succeed.

2 Chron. 20:21 And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed them to sing to Jehovah and give thanks in holy array as they went out before the army and say, Give thanks to Jehovah, for His lovingkindness endures forever.

2 Chron. 20:22 And when they began to shout in song and to praise, Jehovah set ambushes for the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who were coming out against Judah; and they were struck.

Acts 12:3 And when he saw that it was pleasing to the Jews, he went on to arrest

Peter also (now those were the days of Unleavened Bread),

Acts 12:4 Whom also he seized and put in prison, delivering him to four quaternions of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people.

Acts 12:5 So then Peter was kept in the prison; but prayer was being made fervently by the church to God concerning him.

Acts 12:6 And when Herod was about to bring him forward, that night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and guards before the door were keeping the prison.

Acts 12:7 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and roused him, saying, Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off his hands.

Acts 12:8 And the angel said to him, Gird yourself and tie on your sandals. And he did so. And he said to him, Throw your cloak around you and follow me.

Acts 12:9 And he went out and followed him; yet he did not know that what was taking place through the angel was real, but thought that he was seeing a vision.

Acts 12:10 And passing the first guard and the second, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened of itself to them. And going out, they went forward one lane; and immediately the angel departed from him.

Acts 12:11 And Peter came to himself and said, Now I know truly that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me out of Herod's hand and from all the expectation of the Jewish people.

Acts 12:12 And when he became aware of this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was surnamed Mark, where there was a considerable number assembled together and praying.

Acts 16:19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit had gone out, they laid hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.

Acts 16:20 And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, These men, being Jews, are throwing our city into confusion,

Acts 16:21 And they are announcing customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to accept or do.

Acts 16:22 And the crowd rose up together against them, and the magistrates tore off their garments and ordered some to beat them with rods.

Acts 16:23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them securely,

Acts 16:24 Who, having received such a charge, threw them into the inner prison and secured their feet in the stocks.

Acts 16:25 And about midnight Paul and Silas, while praying, sang hymns of praise to God; and the prisoners were listening to them.

Acts 16:26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken. And instantly all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

Acts 16:27 And the jailer, waking up out of his sleep and seeing the doors of the prison opened, drew his sword and was about to do away with himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

Acts 16:28 But Paul called out with a loud voice, saying, Do no harm to yourself, for we are all here.

Acts 16:29 And the jailer asked for lights and rushed in; and trembling, he fell down before Paul and Silas.

Acts 16:30 And leading them outside, he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.

Acts 16:32 And they spoke the word of God to him together with all those in his house.

Acts 16:33 And he took them with him in that very hour of the night and washed their wounds. And he was baptized immediately, he and all his household.

Acts 16:34 And he brought them up into his house and set a table before them; and he exulted because he had believed in God with all his household.

D. Our praising is to glorify God—Psa. 50:23.

Psa. 50:23 Whoever offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies Me; And to him who sets his way right I will show the salvation of God.

E. God Himself is exulted through praise—Psa. 22:3

Psa. 22:3 But You are holy, You who sit enthroned Upon the praises of Israel.

II. The nature of praising—an offering, a sacrifice—Heb. 13:10, 15.

Heb. 13:10 We have an altar from which they who are serving the tabernacle have no right to eat.

Heb. 13:15 Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name.

III. The production of praising:

A. Faith produces praise—Psa. 106:12

Psa. 106:12 Then they believed His words; They sang His praise.

B. Obedience produces praise.

C. The enjoyment of Christ will make us so strong to utter a complete and a perfected praise to the Lord. This is the highest consummation that God has completed in His redemption through Christ.

IV. The content of Praising:

A. An example of Psalms: Christ (as revealed by the word—Luke 24:44) and the church is for God's kingdom, house, and city (as typified by the holy temple and Jerusalem):

Luke 24:44 And He said to them, These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning Me must be fulfilled.

1. God's intention is to turn the seeking saints from the law to Christ that they may enjoy the house of God—Psalms Book one, Psalm 1, 27, and 36.

2. The saints experience God and His house and city through the suffering, exalted and reigning Christ—Psalm Book two.

3. The saints, in their experiences, realize that the house and the city of God with all the enjoyments thereof can only be preserved and maintained with Christ properly appreciated and exalted by God's people—Psalm Book three.

4. The saints, being joined to Christ, are one with God so that He can recover His title over the earth through Christ in His house and city—Psalm Book four.

5. The house and city of God become the praise, safety, and desire of the saints—Psalm Book five.

B. An example of Psalm eight: Christ's work of incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, ascension, enthronement, being made Lord, Christ, and King of kings, that is the unique ruler of the universe.

V. The practice of praising:

A. Praise before understanding—Psa. 50:23; 1 Cor. 13:12.

Psa. 50:23 Whoever offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies Me; And to him who sets his way right I will show the salvation of God.

1 Cor. 13:12 For now we see in a mirror obscurely, but at that time face to face;

now I know in part, but at that time I will fully know even as also I was fully known.

B. Praise seven times a day—Psa. 119:164.

Psa. 119:164 Seven times a day I praise You For Your righteous ordinances.

C. Praise the Lord all our life—Psa. 146:2.

Psa. 146:2 I will praise Jehovah while I live; I will sing psalms to my God while I yet have being.

REFERENCE

Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 1, Msg. 16; Life-study of Psalms, Msgs. 1 to 5.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAISING

Praise is the highest work carried out by God's children. We can say that the highest expression of a saint's spiritual life is his praise to God. God's throne is the highest point in the universe, yet He sits "enthroned upon the praises of Israel" (Psa. 22:3). God's name and even God Himself are exulted through praise. (Messages for Building up New Believers, Vol. 1, p. 247)

Praising is the way to overcome spiritual attacks. Many people say that Satan is afraid of the prayers of God's children; he flees whenever God's children kneel down to pray. This is why he often attacks God's children and frustrates them from praying. This is a common attack. But we will point out another fact: Satan's greatest attacks are not aimed at prayers; his greatest attacks are aimed at praise. ...Satan does not attack just prayer; he also attacks the praise of God's children. The ultimate goal of Satan is to stop all praises to God. Prayer is a warfare, but praise is a victory. Prayer signifies spiritual warfare, but praise signifies spiritual victory. (p. 250)

When you pray, you are still in the midst of your situation. But when you praise, you soar above your situation....Many times praise works where prayer fails. This is a very basic principle. If you cannot pray, why not praise? The

Lord has placed another item in your hands for your victory and for you to boast in victory....We need to learn to maintain this lofty spirit, this spirit that surpasses all attacks. Prayers may not bring us to the throne, but praise surely brings us to the throne at any time. Prayers may not enable us to overcome every time, but praise does not fail even once. ...Nothing moves the Lord's hand as quickly as praise. Prayer is not the fastest way to move the Lord's hand; praise is the fastest way....Here we see that spiritual victory does not depend on warfare but on praising. We need to learn to overcome Satan by our praise. We overcome Satan not only by prayer but also by praise. Many people are conscious of Satan's ferocity and their own weaknesses, and they resolve to struggle and pray. However, we find a very unique principle here: Spiritual victory does not depend on warfare but on praise. (pp. 251-252, 254)

THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISING

However, the Psalms contain chapters not only of praises but also of suffering. God wants His people to know that the praising ones are the very ones who have been led through trying situations and whose feelings have been wounded. These psalms show us men led by God through shadows of darkness. They were rejected, slandered, and persecuted. "All Your waves and Your billows / Pass over me" (42:7). Yet God perfected praises out of these ones. Words of praise do not always come from the mouths of the smooth-sailing ones. They come much more from those who are under discipline and trial. In the Psalms we can touch the most wounded feelings, and in the Psalms we also can find the greatest and highest praises. ...This shows us the nature of praise in the eyes of God. The nature of praise is an offering, a sacrifice. In other words, praise comes from pain and suffering. Hebrews 13:15 says, "Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name." What is a sacrifice? A sacrifice is an offering. An offering means death and loss. The person who offers an offering must suffer some loss. An offering, a sacrifice must be offered up. This offering up constitutes a loss. ...In other words, God inflicts wounds; He breaks and cuts a person deeply, yet at the same time, such a person turns to Him and praises Him. Suffering for the sake of offering

God praise is a kind of offering. God likes men to praise Him in this way. God likes to be enthroned upon this kind of praise. (pp. 248-249)

THE PRODUCING OF PRAISING

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord has established strength (praise—Matt. 21:16) because of His adversaries, to stop the enemy and the avenger (Psa. 8:2). We have seen that babes and sucklings are the youngest, smallest, and weakest among men, indicating the highest consummation of the Lord's work in His redemption. In God's salvation, the top consummation is to perfect the smallest and the weakest to praise God. When we enjoy Christ's redemption to the uttermost, we will be bold to praise the Lord. When we are discouraged and disappointed, we may sigh and groan. But when we praise the Lord, this is the highest experience of our enjoyment of Christ. The enjoyment of Christ will make us so strong to utter a complete and a perfected praise to the Lord. We all have to learn how to praise. This is the highest consummation that God has completed in His redemption through Christ. (Life-study of Psalms, p. 60)

The babes and sucklings are produced through regeneration in the initial stage. Then they continue to be produced in full through their sanctification, renewing, and transformation. Through transformation they are perfected in praising the Lord. This is the Lord's recovery and the Lord's victory. God overcomes His enemy through these babes and sucklings. The work of Christianity is to produce active ones; they endeavor to produce "giants." Our work is to produce babes and sucklings. (p. 68)

THE CONTENT OF PRAISING

The Bible pays much attention to praise. It is spoken of frequently in the Scriptures. The book of Psalms is full of praises. The book of Psalms is in fact a book of praise in the Old Testament. Many praises are quoted from Psalms. (Messages for Building up New Believers, Vol. 1, pp. 247-248)

The book of Psalms is not of doctrines or of any kind of teachings. The writings of the Psalms are in the form of praises. These praises were not

composed by doctrine or understanding of teachings. (Life-study of Psalms, p. 2)

The Psalms were written according to two kinds of concepts....The first concept, according to which the Psalms were written, is the human concept of the holy writers. Their human concept was produced out of their good nature created by God, formed with the traditions of their holy race, constituted with the teachings of their Holy Scriptures, promoted by their practice of a holy life, and uttered out of their holy sentiments and impressions....The Psalms were also written according to the divine concept of God as the divine revelation. This divine concept of God as the divine revelation is concerning His eternal economy in Christ, taking Christ as its centrality and universality. It is also concerning Christ in His divinity, humanity, human living, all-inclusive death, life-imparting and seed-producing resurrection, glorification, ascension, appearing in glory, and reigning forever. All these points are clearly, and even in detail, revealed in the Psalms. The divine concept in the Psalms is also concerning God's heart's desire, His good pleasure in Christ as His centrality and universality, in the church as His fullness for His expression, in the kingdom for His eternal administration, and in the recovery of the earth for His eternal kingdom in eternity. This divine concept of God was uttered from the godly writers of the Psalms as a part of the utterance in their holy writings. The same writers uttered two kinds of concepts—the human concept and the divine concept. (p. 4-5)

This short psalm (Psalm 8) reveals so much. It speaks of the heavens, the earth, babes and sucklings, man, three categories of enemies, and the Lord's incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, ascension, coming back, and kingdom. We Christians may praise the Lord, but our praise needs to be perfected. We need to praise Him for His splendor above the heavens and His excellency on earth. Then we can praise Him for His incarnation for Him to come to visit us. Then we should go on to praise Him for His human living, for His death, for His resurrection, for His ascension, and for His kingdom. We have to praise Him with all these matters. Then our praises will be perfected, completed. This praise is the strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. Such perfected praise is the ultimate consummation of the

Lord's work of incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming back to rule on this earth. (p. 69)

THE PRACTICE OF PRAISING

David said in a psalm that he prayed to God three times a day (Psa. 55:17). Yet in another psalm, he said that he praised God seven times a day (119:164). David was inspired by the Holy Spirit when he acknowledged the importance of praising. He prayed only three times a day, but he praised seven times a day. Furthermore, he appointed Levites to play psalteries and harps to exalt, thank, and praise God before the ark of His covenant (1 Chron. 16:4-6). When Solomon completed the building of Jehovah's temple, the priests carried the ark of the covenant into the Holy of Holies. When the priests came out of the Holy Place, the Levites stood beside the altar, sounded the trumpets, and sang with cymbals, psalteries, and harps. Together they sounded praises to God. At that moment, the glory of Jehovah filled His house (2 Chron. 5:12-14). Both David and Solomon touched God's heart and offered up sacrifices of praise that were pleasing to God. Jehovah is enthroned upon the praises of Israel. We should praise the Lord all our life. We should sing praises to our God. (Messages for Building up New Believers, Vol. 1, p. 247)

We should not only pray to God but also learn all the more to praise God. We need to see the significance of praise at the very beginning of our Christian walk. We must praise God unceasingly. David received grace from God to praise seven times a day. It is a good exercise, a very good lesson, and a very good spiritual practice to praise God every day. We should learn to praise God when we get up early in the morning. We should learn to praise Him when we encounter problems, when we are at a meeting, or when we are alone. We should praise God at least seven times a day. Do not let David beat us in his praise. If we have not learned to praise God every day, it is hard to have the kind of sacrifice of praise spoken of in Hebrews 13. (p. 249)

QUESTIONS

1. Please explain according to the Bible why Christians must praise?

2. What is the importance of praising and what is the different between praising and prayer?

3. How are praises produced?

4. What is the content of praises?

5. Please speak of your experience in praising.

LESSON TWENTY-THREE

EXERCISING THE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading:

Prov. 20:27 The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, searching all the innermost parts of the inner being.

1 Tim. 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.

2 Tim. 1:6-7 For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.

Hymn: #8487—Exercise the spirit (Encouragement)

Encouragement—For Exercising the Spirit

OUTLINE

I. Knowing our human spirit:

A. Our spirit is the lamp of the Lord, searching all our inward parts—Prov. 20:27.

Prov. 20:27 The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, Searching all the innermost parts of the inner being.

B. Our spirit is the hidden man of the heart—1 Pet. 3:4.

1 Pet. 3:4 But the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptible adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which is very costly in the sight of God.

C. Our regenerated spirit is our inner man—Eph. 3:16.

Eph. 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man.

II. Knowing the need of our human spirit:

A. Our spirit needing to be stirred up—Ezra 1:1, 5; cf. Exo. 35:21.

Ezra 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus the king of Persia, so that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus the king of Persia; and he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it also in writing,

saying,

Ezra 1:5 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites rose up, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred up to go up to build the house of Jehovah, which is in Jerusalem.

Exo. 35:21 And they came, everyone whose heart lifted him up and everyone whose spirit made him willing, and brought the heave offering of Jehovah for the work of the Tent of Meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments.

B. Our spirit needing to be burning—Rom. 12:11; Acts 18:25.

Rom. 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.

Acts 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

C. Our spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit needing to be the faculty of our prayer—Eph. 6:18.

Eph. 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints.

D. Our spirit needing to be the means of our worship—John 4:24.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

E. Our spirit needing to take the lead in enjoying the Lord—Luke 1:46-47.

Luke 1:46 And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord,

Luke 1:47 And my spirit has exulted in God my Savior.

F. Our spirit needing to take the initiative in spiritual ministry—1 Cor. 14:32.

1 Cor. 14:32 And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

III. Exercising our human spirit—1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:7; 4:22:

1 Tim. 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.

2 Tim. 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.

2 Tim. 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

A. Exercise being a strong term used in the New Testament—1 Tim.

4:7:

1 Tim. 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.

1. Exercising ourselves unto godliness—1 Tim. 4:7-8:

1 Tim. 4:8 For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.

a. Bodily exercise profiting for a little.

b. Godliness being profitable for all things.

2. Exercising unto godliness by exercising our spirit with which the Lord is—1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:7; 4:22.

B. Fanning our spirit into flame—2 Tim. 1:6-7:

2 Tim. 1:6 For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Tim. 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.

1. God having given us not a spirit of cowardice, but of power, love, and sobermindedness.

2. Our spirit being surrounded by the three parts of the soul—mind, emotion, and will:

a. Our will should be strong, full of power.

b. Our emotion should love people, full of love.

c. Our mind should be sober, full of sobermindedness.

C. Setting our mind on the spirit—Rom. 8:5-6:

Rom. 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

1. Our mind set on the flesh is death.

2. Our mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

D. Discerning our spirit and soul—Heb. 4:12:

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit

and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

IV. The way to exercise the spirit:

A. Exercising the spirit by calling on the name of the Lord.

B. Exercising the spirit by pray-reading the Word of God.

C. Exercising the spirit by praying.

D. Exercising the spirit by changing of organ.

E. Exercising the spirit by seeking the truth.

F. Exercising the spirit by walking according to the Spirit—Rom. 8:4-6; Gal. 5:16, 25:

Rom. 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

Rom. 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Gal. 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Gal. 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

1. Learning to sense the Spirit.

2. Walking according to the inner life and peace.

REFERENCE

The Basic Lessons on Life, Chs. 17-18; Our Human Spirit, Ch. 10; The Four Crucial Elements—Christ, The Spirit, Life, and the Church, Ch. 7; The Spirit with Our Spirit, Ch. 8.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

KNOWING OUR HUMAN SPIRIT

Our Spirit Is The Lamp Of The Lord, Searching All Our Inward Parts

Proverbs 20:27 says that our spirit is the lamp of the Lord searching all our inward parts. This shows that within man there is something of God, and this is man's spirit to be God's lamp. Of course, in the lamp is the light, so here the implication is very meaningful. Within man there is such a lamp, but the lamp needs the light and the light is God. What man has is just an empty lamp. The lamp needs the light to shine. This shows that God as the light does have something in man as His vessel to contain Him and to express Him, just as the lamp contains the light and expresses it.

Our Spirit Is The Hidden Man Of The Heart

First Peter 3:4 reveals that our spirit is the hidden man of our heart. The hidden man is a meek and quiet spirit. When our spirit is meek and quiet, it is hidden. First Peter 3:4 indicates that every part of our being may be considered as a man. Our physical body is our outward man, our soul is our expressed, manifested man, and our spirit is our hidden man.

Our Regenerated Spirit Being Our Inner Man

We have to help the saints realize that our human spirit is the lamp of God, serving God with a purpose. Furthermore, this spirit is a beautiful, hidden man in the sight of God. Also, when our spirit is regenerated, it becomes the inner man (Eph. 3:16). The sense of the word inner is stronger than the sense of the word hidden. The hidden man is one that is not manifested, but the inner man can be very active and aggressive. According to Ephesians 3, the inner man must be very active and very aggressive to live the Lord out. After the inner man is strengthened, Christ has the way to make His home in our hearts. This indicates that the inner man is not just something hidden, meek, and quiet but is something very living, active, and aggressive so that Christ may use it for Himself to make His home in our hearts.

According to the Bible, I believe the above three points are the basic description of what our spirit is. Our spirit is the lamp of the Lord, a pretty, hidden man in God's eyes, and the inner man, living, active, and aggressive for the Lord to fulfill His purpose. These three points help us to know what our spirit is. (The Basic Lessons on Life, p. 135)

KNOWING THE NEED OF OUR HUMAN SPIRIT

Our Spirit Needing To Be Stirred Up

Beginning from this point, we need to see what our spirit should do. Ezra 1:1 says that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia. Then verse 5 says that God stirred up the spirit of a remnant of Israelites to go up to build His house in Jerusalem. Our spirit needs to be stirred up for God's interest (cf. Exo. 35:21). We should not wait for others to stir up our spirit. Instead, we should stir up our spirit by exercising our spirit (cf. 2 Tim. 1:6-7). On the one hand, the Lord is the One who stirs our spirit up, but we should not be passive. We ourselves have to cooperate with the Lord to stir up our spirit.

Our Spirit Needing To Be Burning

Our spirit needs to be burning. Romans 12:11 charges us to be burning in spirit, and Acts 18:25 tells us that Apollos was fervent, burning, in spirit.

Our Spirit Indwelt by the Holy Spirit Needing to be the Faculty of Our Prayer

Prayer is the way to exercise our spirit, but many Christians do not pray with their spirit. They pray by using merely their mouth and their mentality with their emotion. They do not use their spirit when they pray. If one person asks another person to do something for him, he might simply open up his mouth according to his mentality and his emotion without exercising his spirit. Many Christians today pray to the Lord in exactly the same way. They do not use their spirit.

In the past we prayed many times without exercising our spirit, but Ephesians 6:18 says that we need to pray at every time in our spirit. We need to use our spirit as the faculty of prayer. We cannot hear things by exercising our eyes or smell things by using our ears. We must use the proper faculty to hear and to smell. In the same way, we have to pray by exercising our spirit as the proper faculty of our prayer. The faculty for us to pray is not our mind or emotion but our spirit. The more we stress this, the better. Many saints and young ones among us need to learn how to use their spirit in prayer.

Our Spirit Needing
To Be The Means Of Our Worship

According to John 4:24, our spirit needs to be the means of our worship. We need to worship God the Spirit in our spirit and with our spirit. Many saints come to the meeting to meet, but they do not come to worship. We may go through the formality of meeting without rendering the Lord the real worship He desires. To worship is to exercise our spirit. Whenever we begin to exercise our spirit, the worship begins. We may think our worship begins when we call a hymn or when we pray. But our worship actually begins when our spirit rises up and is exercised.

Our meetings need to be full of the exercise of the spirit. When we come together to meet, before singing, before praying, before reading, before doing anything, all of us should exercise our spirit. There should be such a worshipping spirit in all our meetings. Many times the elders exercise their spirit to open the meeting. Then they stir up others' spirit. This is not the best situation. All of the saints must rise up to exercise their spirit. We have to help the saints to realize that we need to use our spirit to worship. Our spirit needs to worship God directly apart from merely depending upon singing, reading, or praying in a formal way.

Our Spirit Needing
To Take The Lead In Enjoying The Lord

Our spirit needs to take the lead in enjoying the Lord. This is fully shown in Luke 1:46-47. In these verses Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has exulted in God my Savior." These two verses, no doubt, are describing th4e enjoyment of the Lord, and in the enjoyment of the Lord, our spirit has to take the lead. First, Mary's spirit exulted in God; then her soul magnified the Lord. Her praise to God issued from her spirit and was expressed through her soul. But today we mostly use our soul first. We must learn to directly use our spirit and let the soul be a follower of the spirit. Our spirit must take the lead aggressively in enjoying the Lord. Our spirit should subdue our soul to make the soul its follower.

Our Spirit Needing To Take The Initiative In Spiritual Ministry

First Corinthians 14:32 says, "This spirits of prophets are subject to prophets." In our spiritual ministry, our spirit has to take the initiative. If our spirit is waiting, that means our spirit is dormant. On all occasions, our spirit should take the initiative to minister something. (pp. 135-138)

EXERCISING OUR HUMAN SPIRIT

In the New Testament there are a number of seeming contradictions. Actually, of course, they are not contradictions. On the one hand, the New Testament reveals that we should not have our own works. We should not do things in ourselves either to participate in God's blessing or to accomplish something for God's purpose. But on the other hand, the New Testament uses a strong word such as exercise. In Colossians Paul said that he labored, toiled, fought, and struggled in an agonizing way (1:29; 2:1). These words are stronger words showing something which is very difficult to do. We all need to see these two aspects. Our not doing anything means that we should not do anything by our flesh, by ourselves, or by our natural life. But on the positive side, we have to labor, to travail, and to struggle in our spirit. Actually, the exercise of our spirit comprises and implies all these words: labor, toil, struggle, wrestle, and fight.

Today whatever we do positively in our spirit is a kind of exercise. The word in Greek for exercise is the basis of the English word gymnastics. To participate in gymnastics, one must use all of his energy to exercise his whole physical being. We must exercise our spirit in the same way. The whole environment around us does not help us to exercise. It has an intention to keep us down. The whole situation does not help us to go on to labor. It helps us to be lazy; helps us to be backsliding. It is a downhill current. The downhill current helps us go down. Actually, the current carries you. But if you go uphill, you have to exercise, and you have to struggle. (p. 142)

Fanning Our Spirit Into Flame

Second Timothy 1:6-7 indicates that we need to fan our spirit into flame. In these verses Paul said, "For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the

gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness." Some might think that these verses do not say that we should fan our spirit but that we should fan our gift. But if you get into these verses, you will see that the fanning of our gift into flame is the fanning of our spirit into flame. Paul tells us in verse 6 to "fan into flame the gift of God" then in verse 7 he says, "For God has not given us a spirit...." Our God-given spirit is what we must fan into flame. We have to fan our spirit. (The Spirit With Our Spirit, p. 80)

Setting Our Mind On The Spirit

After you fan your spirit into flame, learn to practice another thing. Always manage your mind. Do not let your mind be a "wild horse." The mind is the great part of the soul, and the soul is in between our outward flesh and our inward spirit. Romans 8:6 says, "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." After fanning our spirit into flame, we must learn to set our mind on the spirit. Our mind is very "talkative." The mind speaks to us everywhere at all times. If we do not control our mind, we can wander in our imagination all over the globe within a short time. We can dream in our mind even during the day. This is why we must direct our mind to the spirit. When we do this, we will sing to the Lord, praise the Lord, or speak forth the Lord.

Discerning Our Spirit And Soul

In Hebrews 4:12 the word discern is used. It says that the word of God can divine our soul from our soul spirit and is able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Quite often our thoughts are deceiving. But if we exercise our spirit, there is a discernment that our thoughts are evil, because behind our thoughts there is an evil intention. To discern the thoughts and intents of the heart equals the dividing of the soul from the spirit. All the times you have to keep your spirit separate from your soul. The enemy's strategy is always to mix our spirit up with our soul. In today's world nearly everyone is in a mixed situation. They mix up their spirit with their soul. Whenever such mixing is there, the spirit loses and the soul wins. (pp. 84-85)

THE WAY TO EXERCISE THE SPIRIT

One of the secrets of exercising our spirit is to call on the name of the Lord. We may consider calling on the name of the Lord as the best secret of exercising our spirit. For example, the secret of exercising our feet is to walk. For walking, we use our feet; for seeing, we use our eyes; for hearing, we use our ears; and for praying, we use our spirit. Whenever we pray, we need to use our spirit. Some may have the feeling that when they pray they are often in their mind and not in their spirit. Praying in spirit requires much exercise. This may be likened to a child learning to walk. Before he can walk, he must first learn to crawl and later to stand. After he can stand, then he learns to walk. Once he learns to walk, he no longer needs to crawl or hold on to something. Perhaps when you first start to pray, you are in your mind; but after much practice in praying, you will gradually be in spirit. After further practice, you will reach a point that whenever you pray, you pray in your spirit and with your spirit. Prayer is not just for petitioning God but even more for contacting and fellowshipping with God. Therefore, the best way to pray is to call on the name of the Lord. The Bible even tells us to pray unceasingly (1 Thes. 5:17). The only way to pray unceasingly is to call on the name of the Lord.

Besides praying, we need to read the Bible. Reading the Bible is not for gaining more knowledge and doctrines but for receiving spiritual supply. The Bible contains profound truths that are not for the believers' objective knowledge but for their subjective experience. To dive into these profound truths, we need to use our spirit because the Lord said that His words are spirit and are life (John 6:63). To touch the spirit in the Lord's words, we need to use our spirit. When we use our spirit, we dive into these profound truths, which are able to help open up our prayers, making them more penetrating and richer. Whether our prayers are deep and rich depends totally upon our knowledge of the truth.

Therefore, there are two secrets of exercising our spirit: prayer and pursuing the truth. These two matters complement each other. We must pray, and we must also dive into the truth. Praying can help us get into the truth. The more we get into the truth, the deeper and richer our experiences will be.

Even the sense we have when calling on the name of the Lord becomes deep, rich, and weighty. In this way our taste and feeling for the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be very different from that in the past. (The Four Crucial Elements—Christ, The Spirit, Life, and the Church, pp. 109-110)

The Christian walk is a walk according to spirit (Rom. 8:4) which is our spirit mingled with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). We have seen that we can know this spirit by sensing the different aspects of life, peace, or death. Whatever we do, whatever we say, we have to do it and say it by the spirit, not by the soul or by the flesh. Whatever we do, we must turn to the Lord. Some Christians may think to turn to the Lord means to turn to the heavens, but to turn to the Lord in our experience is to turn to our spirit because the Lord is in our spirit. This means to set our mind on the spirit (Rom. 8:6). To set our mind on the spirit means to turn ourselves to the Lord. We must turn away from the flesh, away from reason, away from sickness, and away from troubles. Even Bible knowledge and teaching could be a distraction from which we must turn away. Day by day we have been distracted from our spirit by many outward things.

To love your wife is not wrong, but good. To consider the Bible teachings and seek after knowledge is good, but in our love, consideration, and seeking, we are mostly independent from the Lord. We set our mind, which represents our self, on so many things other than the Lord Himself in our spirit. We mostly either do things by the soul or by the flesh, not by the spirit. We all must learn this practice: whatever happens to us, we must turn ourselves to the Lord. This means to turn to the spirit. On the one hand, I deny my natural and independent mind, emotion, and will, which is my self. On the other hand, I learn to sense the spirit. I only do things when I sense that I have the inner life and peace. To do this is to exercise the spirit. We all must practice to walk according to spirit in this way. (Our Human Spirit, pp. 70-71)

QUESTIONS

1. Please describe your understanding of the human spirit according to the Bible?

2. What is the need of the human spirit?

3. According to the Bible, why must Christians exercise the spirit?

4. How does one exercise the spirit?

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR

SPEAKING THE WORD OF GOD

Scripture Reading:

Num. 11:29b …Oh that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put His Spirit upon them!

1 Cor. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

Eph. 5:18b …but be filled in spirit,

Eph. 5:19 Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord,

2 Cor. 4:13 And having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak,

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. God's desire:

A. Spoken by Moses in the Old Testament—Num. 11:29.

Num. 11:29b …Oh that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put His Spirit upon them!

B. Spoken by Paul in the New Testament—1 Cor. 14:31.

1 Cor. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

C. Proven by the experience of the believers—1 Cor. 9:16-17.

1 Cor. 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, I have no boast, for necessity is laid upon me; for woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.

1 Cor. 9:17 If I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship.

II. Praying and speaking the word of God—Acts 6:4.

Acts 6:4 But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.

III. Being filled with the Holy Spirit without (full) and speaking the word of God—Acts 4:31; Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16.

Acts 4:31 And when they had so besought, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Eph. 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,

Eph. 5:19 Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

IV. Speaking the word of God by the spirit of faith—1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:13.

1 Cor. 12:3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking in the Spirit of God says, Jesus is accursed; and no one can say, Jesus is Lord! except in the Holy Spirit.

2 Cor. 4:13 And having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak.

V. Speaking the word of God everywhere—Acts 8:4.

Acts 8:4 Those therefore who were scattered went throughout the land announcing the word as the gospel.

VI. Speaking the word of God at all times—2 Tim. 4:2.

2 Tim. 4:2 Proclaim the word; be ready in season and out of season; convict, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching.

REFERENCE

Everyone Speaking the Word of God, Chs. 1 to 2; The Practice of Prophesying, Chs. 1 to 6; Words of Training for the New Way, Chs. 11 to 12; The Divine Speaking, Ch. 3; The Practice of the Church Life according to the God-ordained Way, Chs. 4 to 9; The Living Needed for Building Up the Small Group Meetings, Ch. 5.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

GOD'S DESIRE

Spoken By Moses In The Old Testament

In the book of Numbers in the Old Testament there is the concept that everyone must speak the word of God, or that everyone may speak the word of God, or, we might say, that everyone is able to speak the word of God. In summary we might say that one who is saved, one who serves the Lord, has the qualification, the right, the ability, and also the responsibility and burden to speak the word of God. (Everyone Speaking the Word of God, p. 7)

Spoken By Paul In The New Testament

First Corinthians 14:31 says, "For you can all prophesy one by one." This verse is one of the clearest verses in the entire Bible. It says that all the believers have the capacity to prophesy. Capacity denotes an ability by birth. Dogs do not have the capacity to speak human language; they have the capacity only to bark. Human beings, however, have the capacity to speak. We, members of the Body of Christ, all can prophesy one by one. (The Practice of Prophesying, p. 11)

Proven By The Experience Of The Believers

In 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul said, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season." Moses in the Old Testament said, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets." Paul in the New Testament also said, "You can all prophesy one by one." Again Paul said, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. If I do this voluntarily, I have a reward." ...Actually to preach the gospel is to speak God's word....Please consider your own experience. After you were saved, time after time when you came to the meeting, were there not many times when you felt that you should speak, but after some consideration you eventually did not speak? Every time that you felt to speak but did not speak, did you not feel miserable after the meeting? I myself have had this experience; often when I was moved to speak but did not speak, after I went home I suffered for three days and three nights, and I was very disappointed. But if I spoke immediately when I was moved to speak, I felt comfortable after speaking. (Everyone Speaking the Word of God, p. 10)

PRAYING AND SPEAKING THE WORD OF GOD

Now you have the treasure—the Word of God. To know God's word as the Spirit, you must have sufficient prayer. In Acts 6:4 the twelve Apostles said, "But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word." Without prayer, your speaking of the word of God will not be effective. You may have the word of God, but you need to be a man of prayer. I am not advising you to fast, to pray without eating or sleeping for three days and three nights. Rather, I mean that you must be a person who prays regularly. One who prays regularly is one who has fellowship with the Lord. Whenever you feel that you have sins, you must deal with them properly. Whenever you feel that you have touched the world and have been defiled by the world, you must be cleansed in a good way. Whenever you feel that the Lord has a demand upon you and you have not responded adequately, you must also deal with it. You must always be a person who has fellowship with the Lord. Even when you speak to others, you must speak in the spirit of prayer....No matter to whom you are speaking—you must have a spirit of prayer, and you must be a person of prayer. (p. 24)

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT WITHOUT (FULL) AND SPEAKING THE WORD OF GOD

John 1:1 says that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, who is the Triune God. Chapter six, verse 63, continues to say that the word the Lord speaks to us is spirit. Therefore, the Word is God, and the Word is also the spirit. Then 7:38 says that once we believe in the Lord, we receive the Spirit; the result is that there are rivers of living water flowing out of us. The rivers of living water are the Lord's words that are flowing out unceasingly. These three portions of the Scriptures show us that the Triune God as the Word becomes the Spirit to enter into us. When we speak the Lord's word with the Spirit, He will flow out from within us. Moreover, since the Triune God is the Word, Romans 10:8 says that this word is near us, in our mouth and in our heart... Since this is a fact, then we should be filled in spirit with the Triune God, as recorded in Ephesians 5:18, so that out from within us can flow rivers of living water. How do these rivers of living water flow out? This

is through the speaking to one another as mentioned in verse 19. (Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 1, pp. 108-109)

Ephesians 5:18-19 and Colossians 3:16 are sister portions. Ephesians speaks concerning being filled with the Spirit, and Colossians speaks concerning being filled with the word. These two are one thing. When these portions of Scripture are put together, they prove to us that our speaking the Lord's word with the spirit is to flow out the Holy Spirit. The word and the Spirit are one. For this reason, every one of us, especially the trainees, from now on should have much practice to speak the Lord's word with the spirit just as we would practice calligraphy or piano. Once you enter into the meeting, regardless of whether it is a home meeting, a small group meeting, or a large meeting, you need to open your mouth and speak the Lord's word with the Spirit...

Every one should be living, and every one should speak the Lord's word in the meetings. From now on, we all need to exercise to speak the Lord's word with the spirit. We may use the bible to speak, or we may use a hymn to speak. It is not too difficult to do this well, as long as everyone is willing to practice sincerely. (pp. 109-110)

SPEAKING THE WORD OF GOD BY THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

In the first book to the Corinthians Paul tells them to speak in the Holy Spirit. Now in the second book he says that he spoke by the spirit of faith....In ancient time the psalmist had the spirit of faith (Psa. 116:10). Now they the apostles also had the spirit of faith. They believed, therefore they also spoke. What did they speak? They spoke their experience. It was not just a certain doctrine, a certain point concerning the Triune God, but the experience of the death, life, and resurrection of Christ. (The Divine Speaking, p. 40)

"Not distinctly the Holy Spirit,—but still not merely a human disposition: the indwelling Holy Spirit penetrates and characterizes the whole renewed man" (Alford). "Spirit of faith: not distinctly the Holy Spirit, nor, on the other hand, a human faculty or disposition, but blending both" (Vincent). The spirit of faith is the Holy Spirit mingled with our human spirit. We must exercise

such a spirit to believe and to speak, like the psalmist, the things we have experienced of the Lord, especially His death and resurrection. Faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit, not in our mind. Doubts are in our mind. Here spirit indicates that it is by the mingled spirit that the apostles lived a crucified life in resurrection for the carrying out of their ministry. (2 Cor. 4:13 note 2)

Faith is a wonder, a miracle within us. Every genuine Christian has such a wonder, a miracle within him. Now by this faith you could go everywhere to tell people that Jesus is the Savior. ...I speak, not by my mind, but by the spirit of faith. Faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit, not in our mind....But the plain words spoken by anyone by the spirit of faith and in the Holy Spirit builds the church. Therefore, we all have to practice everywhere to speak. (The Divine Speaking, pp. 42, 43)

SPEAKING THE WORD OF GOD EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES

Our mouths must speak the words of grace as the Lord Jesus did. Out of His mouth came forth the words of grace (Luke 4:22). Ephesians 4:29 tells us, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good...that it may give grace to those who hear.” Grace may flow out of our mouth; this is the word of God. Brothers and sisters, let us use the time we waste in telephone conversations to call someone we know and preach the gospel to him. We must also visit our relatives to speak the word of the Lord, to speak the truth, and to speak the gospel to them. Not only in the meetings, but also in our daily life, we must speak everywhere and at every time. (Everyone Speaking the Word of God, pp. 9-10)

The several thousand from Jerusalem who were scattered abroad through persecution preached the word of God everywhere (Acts 8:1-4). Paul told Timothy to preach and to speak in season and out of season. It was after these words that Paul told Timothy to preach the Bible which he had known from a babe, and to preach what he had gained from the Bible. Furthermore, he needed to preach everywhere, to preach at all times, and to preach to everyone. (pp. 28-29)

QUESTIONS

1. How do we see from the Bible that God's desire is that everyone should speak God's word?

2. How can we speak God's word?

3. How do we practice speaking God's word?

SERIES II

THE WAY TO STUDY THE TRUTH

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LESSON ONE

THE ESSENCE OF THE BIBLE

Scripture Reading:

2 Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction or correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete fully equipped for every good work.

2 Pet. 1:21 For no prophecy was ever borne by the will of man, but men spoke from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

Matt. 4:4b Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God.

Hymn: 801

OUTLINE

I. The origin of the Bible:

A. The Bible is the breathing out of God—2 Tim. 3:16.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

B. The Bible is men's speaking from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit—2 Pet. 1:20-21.

2 Pet. 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of one's own interpretation;

2 Pet. 1:21 For no prophecy was ever borne by the will of man, but men spoke from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit.

C. The Bible is God's speaking in the prophets, also His speaking to us in the Son—Heb. 1:1-2.

Heb. 1:1 God, having spoken of old in many portions and in many ways to the fathers in the prophets.

Heb. 1:2 Has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom also He made the universe.

D. The Bible is the Holy Spirit's revelation—John 16:13; Rev. 22:18, 19.

John 16:13 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.

Rev. 22:18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this scroll;

Rev. 22:19 And if anyone takes away from the words of the scroll of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city, which are written in this scroll.

II. The essence of the Bible:

A. The word of God is the breathing out of God—2 Tim. 3:16.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

B. The word of God is the spiritual milk—1 Pet.2:2.

1 Pet. 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation,

C. The word of God is the spiritual food—Matt. 4:4.

Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."

D. The word of God is spirit and life—John 6:63.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

E. God is the word, and the word is God—John 1:1.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

III. The function of the Bible:

A. To testify concerning the Lord Jesus—John 5:39.

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me.

B. To make man wise unto salvation—2 Tim. 3:15.

2 Tim. 3:15 And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through the faith which is in

Christ Jesus.

C. To cause man to be regenerated—1 Pet. 1:23.

1 Pet. 1:23 Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God.

D. To be the believers' spiritual milk—1 Pet. 2:2.

1 Pet. 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation.

E. To be the believers' spiritual food—Matt. 4:4.

Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."

F. To cause the believers to be complete—2 Tim. 3:16-17.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

2 Tim. 3:17 That the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

IV. The preciousness and sweetness of the Bible:

A. Every word of the Lord is a pure word—Psa. 12:6, 119:140.

Psa. 12:6 The words of Jehovah are pure words, Silver refined in a furnace on the earth, Purified seven times.

Psa. 119:140 Your word is very pure, And Your servant loves it.

B. The word of the Lord is sweeter than honey—Psa. 119:103.

Psa. 119:103 How sweet are Your words to my taste! Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

C. The word of the Lord is better than thousands of pieces of gold and silver—Psa. 119:72.

Psa. 119:72 The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.

D. The word of the Lord is our heritage forever—Psa. 119:111.

Psa. 119:111 Your testimonies are my heritage forever, For they are the gladness of my heart.

E. No word will be impossible with God—Luke 1:37.

Luke 1:37 Because no word will be impossible with God.

REFERENCE

Truth Lesson, Level 1, Vol. 1, Ch. 1; The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, Ch. 1; Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Lsn. 31.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

After we are saved, in order to have spiritual growth, we must know the Bible. For two thousand years Christians have acknowledged one thing, that no one can know the Lord well without knowing the Bible.

The spiritual inheritance which God has given to us includes, on the one hand, the invisible Holy Spirit and, on the other hand, the visible Holy Bible. On the one hand, the Spirit is within us; on the other hand, the Scripture is outside of us. A proper Christian must be balanced in these two sides… If you are filled with the Holy Spirit within and you also know the Bible without, then, as a Christian, you are living and stable, and you are also active and accurate. You are a Christian who is living and stable as well as active and accurate. (Truth Lessons, Level 1, Volume 1, p. 2)

THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE

The Bible Being God-breathed

The scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16). This tells us that the Scripture did not come out of man's thought, man's mind, but rather, it is God's breathing His thought and His word through His Spirit into and out of the writers. Hence, the Bible contains God's elements and carries His flavor. (p. 2)

The Bible Being the Speaking from God by Men Borne by the Holy Spirit

Since the Scripture is God's breathing His word out from men through His Spirit, no word of the Scripture can be of man's will; rather, men were

borne by the Spirit and spoke out of God. The word, "men spoke from God, being borne by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:20-21), has a twofold meaning: first, men were borne by the Spirit; second, men spoke from God. In the original Greek, being borne by the Holy Spirit means being carried along as a ship by the wind. The writers of the Bible received God's inspiration, and they were under the power of the Holy Spirit, being borne and carried along by Him to speak out God's word. Furthermore, when they spoke, they spoke from within God. It was the Spirit of God carrying men along to speak, and it was also men speaking from within God. (p. 3)

The Bible Being God's Speaking in the Prophets and in the Son

The Old Testament is God' speaking in the prophets; the New Testament is God's speaking in the Son, our Lord Jesus (Heb. 1:1-2).

The Bible Being the Holy Spirit's Revelation

The Bible is the Holy Spirit's revelation. John 16:13 says, "But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." The Lord's word here also proves that after the Spirit's descension, what His disciples spoke and wrote was disclosed to them by the Spirit. Hence, the Lord's word here proves that after His ascension, all the books of the New Testament, written by His disciples, were of the Spirit's revelation and their divine authority was acknowledged by Him. (Truth Lessons, Level 1, Volume 1, pp. 3-4)

THE ESSENCE OF THE WORD

The Word of God is the Breathing Out of God

The Word of God is the Bible. Its essence is: first, God's Word is God's breathing out (2 Tim.3:16). The Bible is God's breathing out; that is, it is the breath breathed out by God. The Bible is God's breathing. To God it is a matter of breathing out; to us it is a matter of breathing in. Through God's

breathing out and our breathing in, God's word enters into us and becomes our life and life supply. Therefore, when we read the Bible, we must understand that the Bible is not merely black words on white paper, but it is the breathing out of God. It is full of spiritual breath. Therefore, we must not only understand the Bible with our mind, but we also must contact the word of the Bible with our spirit. Whenever we read the Bible we come to contact God.

The Word of God is the Spiritual Milk

Second, the Bible is the spiritual milk. In 1 Peter 2:2 Peter said that we need to be like newborn babes desiring the guileless milk of the Word. In the Word of God there is the element of milk. This is also implied in Hebrews 5:12, which says, "You…have become those who have need of milk and not of solid food." God's Word is our spiritual breath; therefore, we must breathe it in. God's Word is also our milk; hence, we must drink it. We must desire the guileless milk of the Word.

The Word of God is the Bread of Life

Third, God's Word is our bread of life, our food of life. This is indicated in Matthew 4:4, a word out of the Lord's mouth and a quote of Deuteronomy 8:3 "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God." Therefore, whenever we read the Bible, we must breathe in the spiritual air, that is, the Spirit of God. We also must drink the spiritual milk and eat the bread of life, which is the Lord Himself.

The Word of the Lord is Spirit and Life

Fourth, the word of the Lord is spirit and life. In John 6:63 the Lord Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life."

God is the Word, the Word also is God

Fifth, God is the Word, the Word also is God. The consummation of the Word is Christ Himself, because Christ is the Word of God. John 1:1 says,

“In the beginning was the Word…and the Word was God.” This Word became flesh, and His name is Jesus Christ. Ultimately, the word in the Bible is God Himself. It is the embodiment of God Himself. This does not mean that we consider the words in black and white as the living God. What we mean is that the words in black and white contain God Himself. This God is Christ; He is our bread of life. This Christ is also the Spirit, who becomes our spiritual milk and our spiritual breath.

Therefore, when we come to read the Bible and learn to understand the Bible, we must have the attitude that the Bible is different from the textbooks in the schools. They are merely black words on white paper, simply a matter of knowledge. The essence of God’s Word, however, is the breathing out of God, God’s spiritual breath. God’s Word is also the spiritual milk and the bread of life. It is spirit and life, and it is even God Himself. Therefore, we need to understand God’s Word and also enter into the essence of God’s Word.

God has worked in a wonderful way. He has given us both the Bible and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is contained within the Bible, and the Bible is carried within the Holy Spirit. They are mutually in one another; hence, the two are inseparable.

When we read the Bible, we touch the Spirit. When we touch the Spirit, the Bible is there as our practical support. We not only breathe in the spiritual breath, drink the spiritual drink eat the spiritual food, and receive the Spirit and life, but we also have the clear Word to be our support, to satisfy our thinking and our thoughts. Here we can see the wonderful work of God. Not only do we have the Holy Spirit, but we also have the Bible. We cannot separate the two. If we read the Lord’s Word daily, the Lord’s Word will enter into us. Then we will know it and understand it. (The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, pp. 16-18).

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE BIBLE

Testifying Concerning the Lord Jesus

The first function of the Bible is to testify concerning the Lord Jesus (John 5:39). The Lord Jesus is the subject and contents of the Bible; the Bible is the explanation and expression of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is God's living Word; the Bible is God's written Word. The Bible, God's written Word, must have the Lord Jesus, the living Word, as its reality; otherwise, it is but mere doctrines and empty letters.

Making Men Wise unto Salvation

The second function of the Bible towards us is to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15); it reveals to us how God saves men in Christ, and how men may be saved by faith, so that we may know the way of salvation.

Causing Men to Be Regenerated

There is also the third function of the Bible, which is to cause us to be regenerated (1 Pet. 1:23). The Bible is the Word of the living God, and it contains the life of the living God. When we receive the word of the Scriptures into us by faith, it comes into us like a seed of life, sowing God's life into us; thus, we have God's life and are regenerated.

Being the Believers' Spiritual Milk

When we first get saved, we do not have a strong enough comprehension concerning spiritual things. Some portions of the Scriptures are like milk that can nourish us and make us grow in our spiritual life (1 Pet. 2:2).

Being the Believers' Bread of Life

The word of the Scriptures is also our spiritual bread of life (Matt. 4:4) which supplies the need of our spiritual life. The nourishment of our spiritual life can only be supplied by the word of the Bible. In order to be living and strong before God, we cannot depend on bread alone, but on every word, that is, the word of the Bible, that proceeds out through the mouth of God.

Making the Believers Complete

The teachings of the Bible can give us endurance, encouragement, and hope (Rom. 15:4). Many Christians have fallen into tribulation and sickness. Being unable to bear it, they feel sorrowful and hopeless, but when they read a portion or a sentence of the Bible, they have the enduring strength in their hearts, or they receive unspeakable comfort, and thus obtain hope that is beyond their expectation…after our regeneration, the Bible is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that we, the men of God, may be complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). (Truth Lessons, Level 1, Volume 1, pp. 4-7)

THE PRECIOUSNESS AND SWEETNESS OF THE BIBLE

Although there are sixty-six books in the Bible, every sentence is pure, like silver that has been purified seven times. Therefore, it is very refined and pure. There are no unnecessary words.

Every person who has earnestly read the Bible confesses that no other book in the world is as perfect and sure as the Bible. No other book in the world is as right, clean and true as the Bible. Whether it is about matters concerning God or man, whether it is about the origins of the heavens and earth or the end of all things, whether it is about the meaning of human life or the way to act as a man, whether it is concerning matters of this life or the things of the coming age, the Bible clearly explains all matters related to man. It truly is perfect and sure. Furthermore, the word of the Bible is not twisted. Its nature is not dirty. Its teachings definitely are not false. The Bible truly is right, clean, and true.

Whoever has truly tasted the flavor of the Bible knows how precious and sweet the Bible is! It truly is more to be desired than gold and sweeter than honey from the honeycomb (Psa. 19:10). If you still do not feel that the Bible is precious and desirable, sweet and lovely, if the word of the Bible is not more precious than gold in your heart and sweeter than honey in your mouth, this proves that you haven't tasted the flavor of the Bible yet. You still cannot appreciate the value of the Bible. I hope you ask God for this

grace, that you would know how precious and sweet His word—the Bible—really is.

The value of the Bible is greater than thousands of gold and silver. Thousands of people from the past to the present all confess and testify to this fact. Why have so many people throughout the ages valued the Bible more than anything else, even more than their own life? Why were so many people martyred for the Bible during the time of the Reformation? Because the Bible is priceless.

The spiritual blessings we receive in the Lord are all heavenly; they cannot be seen by our physical eyes today. The only place we can see these blessings on earth today is in the Bible. All the things on this earth will pass away; nothing is ours. The Bible is our only true heritage on earth today; it will last forever. Therefore, all those who truly know God treasure the Bible, looking upon it as a priceless eternal heritage.

No word in the Bible will be impossible. This is a characteristic of the Bible. The worldly books do not emphasize power, and they do not have power. But the Bible emphasizes power, and truly does have power. Frequently, one sentence of the Bible can cause a person deep in sin to repent and be saved. And one sentence of the Bible frequently changes a person completely. If anyone genuinely touches the word of the Bible, he will feel that the Bible is powerful. This is because the Bible is the word of God. The word of God is as powerful as God is. God accomplished His creation and now rules everything through His word (Heb. 11:3; 1:3). The word of God is the power of God. Since the Bible is the word of God, it has the power of God, and even is the power of God. This power is limitless! (The Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 3, pp. 652-655 in Chinese)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the origin of the Bible? Please answer according to the Scriptures.

2. Please explain what is the essence of the Bible based on the key verses in the Scriptures.

3. What are the functions of the Bible?

4. Why is the Bible so precious and sweet to the believers?

LESSON TWO

THE SUBJECTS OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Hymn: The Books of the Bible

OUTLINE

I. The Subjects of the Books of the New Testament:

◊Matthew——The Gospel Of The Kingdom—Proving That Jesus Christ Is The King-Savior.

◊Mark——The Gospel Of God—Proving That Jesus Christ Is The Slave-Savior.

◊Luke——The Gospel Of The Forgiveness Of Sins—Proving That Jesus Christ Is The Man-Savior.

◊John——The Gospel Of Life—Proving That Jesus Christ Is God The Savior Coming As Life To Propagate Himself.

◊Acts——The Propagation Of The Resurrected Christ In His Ascension, By The Spirit, Through The Disciples, For The Producing Of The Churches—The Kingdom Of God.

◊Romans——The Gospel Of God—To Make Sinners Sons Of God To Constitute The Body Of Christ, Which Is Expressed As The Local Churches.

◊1 Corinthians——Christ And His Cross As The Solution To All Problems In The Church.

◊2 Corinthians——The New Covenant Ministry And Its Ministers.

◊Galatians——Christ Replacing The Law And Being Versus Religion And Tradition.

◊Ephesians——The Church—The Mystery Of Christ, The Body Of Christ As The Fullness Of Christ, Becoming The Fullness Of God.

◊Philippians——Experiencing Christ—Taking Christ As Our Living, Pattern, Goal, Power, And Secret.

◊Colossians——Christ—The All-Inclusive One, Having The First Place In All

Things As The Mystery And Embodiment Of God, As The Head And Constituent Of The Church, As The Allotted Portion, Life, Constituent, And Hope Of The Saints, And As The Body Of All Positive Things.

◊1 Thessalonians——A Holy Life For The Church Life—Serving The Living God, Conducting Ourselves In A Holy Manner, And Waiting For The Lord's Coming.

◊2 Thessalonians——Encouragement And Correction Concerning The Holy Life For The Church Life.

◊1 Timothy——God's Economy Concerning The Church.

◊2 Timothy——Inoculation Against The Decline Of The Church.

◊Titus——The Maintenance Of Order In The Church.

◊Philemon——An Illustration Of The Believers' Equal Status In The New Man.

◊Hebrews——Christ Being Superior To Judaism And Everything Related To It, And The New Covenant Which He Consummated Being Better Than The Old Covenant.

◊James——Practical Christian Perfection.

◊1 Peter——The Christian Life Under The Government Of God.

◊2 Peter——The Divine Provision And The Divine Government.

◊1 John——The Fellowship Of The Divine Life.

◊2 John——Prohibition Against Participation In Heresy.

◊3 John——Encouragement To The Fellow Workers In The Truth.

◊Jude——Contending For The Faith.

◊Revelation——Christ As The Center Of God's Administration According To God's Eternal Economy.

II.——The Subjects of the Books of the Old Testament:

◊Genesis——God Created, Satan Corrupted, Man Fell, And Jehovah Promised To Save.

◊Exodus——Christ Is The Redemption, Salvation, And Supply Of God's People And The Means For Them To Worship And Serve God So That In Him They May Be Built Up With God Together For Them And God To Meet, Communicate, And Dwell Mutually.

◊Leviticus——Christ Is Everything In The Fellowship, Service, And Life Of God's Redeemed.

◊Numbers——Christ Is The Meaning Of Life, The Testimony, The Center Of God's People, And The Leader, The Way, And The Goal Of Their Journey And Fighting.

◊Deuteronomy——Christ Is The Instructor And Leader Of The People Of God That They May Be Able To Enter Into The Heavenly Territory And Participate In His Riches.

◊Joshua——Israel's Occupying And Possessing The Good Land For The Carrying Out Of God's Economy.

◊Judges——Israel's Forsaking God, Suffering Defeat By Their Enemies And Becoming Rotten.

◊Ruth——A Complete Prefigure Of The Gentile Sinners' Being Brought, With Israel, God's Elect, Into The Divine Inheritance Through The Redemption Of Christ In Their Union With Him.

◊1 & 2 Samuel——The Illustrations Of The Way To Enjoy The God-Given Good Land.

◊1 & 2 Kings——God's Governmental Dealing In God's Economy, With The Devastation And Ruin Of The Divine Kingship On Earth By The Kings And The Tragic Issue Of The Just Dealing Of God.

◊1 & 2 Chronicles A Full Chronology Of God's Move In Man's History From Adam Through Samuel To Israel's Return From Their Captivity, With A Presentation Of Some Of The Important Details Of God's Dealing With The Kings Of Judah.

◊Ezra——The Return Of The Children Of Israel From Their Captivity And The Rebuilding Of The House Of God As The Initiation Of God's Recovery Among His Elect For His Testimony On The Earth According To His Economy.

◊Nehemiah——The Rebuilding Of The Wall Of The City Of Jerusalem As A Continual Recovery Among God's Elect For His Testimony For The Accomplishment Of His Economy.

◊Esther——The Very God Who Chose Israel As His Elect Becoming A Hidden God To Them To Take Care Of Them Secretly And To Save Them Openly While Acting In Secrecy During Their Captivity Among The Gentile Nations.

◊Job——The Purpose Of God's Dealing With His Holy One.

◊Psalms——The Expressions Of The Sentiments, Feelings, Impressions, And Experiences Of Godly Men Seeking And Contacting God Through Their Praises, Prayers, And Singing With Exultation.

◊Proverbs——Words Of Wisdom Teaching People How To Behave And How To Build Up Their Character In The Human Life.

◊Ecclesiastes——The Teachings Of Solomon, Showing That The Human Life In The Corrupted World Is A Vanity, A Chasing After The Wind.

◊Song Of Songs——The History Of Love In An Excellent Marriage, Revealing The Progressive Experience Of An Individual Believer's Loving Fellowship With Christ.

◊Isaiah——The Salvation Of Jehovah Through The Incarnated, Crucified, Resurrected, Ascended, And Coming Christ.

◊Jeremiah——Christ Being Made The Righteousness Of Jehovah To God's Elect As Their Center And Circumference, In God's Dealings With Israel And The Nations.

◊Lamentations——The Expression Of Jeremiah's Sorrow And Love Over The Holy City And The Holy People Of God.

◊Ezekiel——God's Appearing To Man In Glory, His Judgment Upon Both His People And The Nations, And His Recovery Of His Chosen People For The Building Up Of A Dwelling Place As A Mutual Abode And Complete Expression For And Of Himself.

◊Daniel——The Destiny Of Israel Apportioned Out By God—The Contents Of The Seventy Weeks.

◊Hosea——Jehovah As The Salvation To The Adulterous And Apostate Israel In Receiving Her Back And Restoring Her.

◊Joel——The Devastation Of The Human Government On Israel In Four Stages And Christ's Destruction Of The Devastators And His Reign Among Israel In The Restoration.

◊Amos——Jehovah's Judgments On Israel And The Surrounding Nations, With The Issue Of Restoration.

◊Obadiah——Jehovah's Dealing With Esau, And Jacob's Victory For The Kingdom Of Jehovah.

◊Jonah——Jehovah's Salvation Reaching Even Unto The Gentile City

Nineveh.

◊Micah——Jehovah's Reproof On Israel And His Restoration Of Israel.

◊Nahum——Jehovah's Judgment On Nineveh As The Capital Of The Evil Assyria.

◊Habakkuk——The Righteous Judgment Of God First On Israel By The Chaldeans And Then On The Chaldeans By The Nations.

◊Zephaniah——Jehovah's Judgment On Israel And On The Nations And His Salvation To The Gentiles And To Israel.

◊Haggai——Jehovah's Dealing With The Returned Captives For The Building Of His House.

◊Zechariah——Jehovah's Hearty Consolation And Promise To His Chastised Chosen People Through The Redemption Of Christ, Who In His Humiliation Became Their Suffering Companion In Their Captivity.

◊Malachi——Jehovah's Dealing With The Sons Of Levi (The Priests Among Israel) And With The Sons Of Jacob (The People Of Israel).

REFERENCE

The Holy Bible, Recovery Version.

QUESTIONS

1. How many books are there in the Old and the New Testaments? How many books are there altogether?

2. What are the names of the books in the New Testament?

3. What are the names of the books in the Old Testament?

4. Name ten books and their subjects, either from the Old or the New Testament.

LESSON THREE

THE PRINCIPLES IN INTERPRETING THE BIBLE (1)

Scripture Reading:

Psa. 119:130 The opening of Your words gives light, Imparting understanding to the simple.

2 Pet. 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of one's own interpretation;

2 Tim. 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth.

Hymn: 816

OUTLINE

I. As literally as possible—Isa. 7:14; Zech. 9:9b:

Isa.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.

Zech. 9:9b … Now your King comes to you. / He is righteous and bears salvation, / Lowly and riding upon a donkey, / Even upon a colt, the foal of a donkey,

A. Example 1: "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." The Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 concerns the Lord Jesus being born of a virgin. This prophecy was fulfilled in Matthew 1:23, when this prophecy was fulfilled, it was fulfilled literally. The virgin referred to an actual virgin.

B. Example 2: "Now your King comes to you. He is righteous and bears salvation, Lowly and riding upon a donkey, Even upon a colt, the foal of a donkey." Again, in the book of Zechariah in the Old Testament it was prophesied that the Lord Jesus would enter Jerusalem the last time on a colt. When the prophecy was fulfilled in Matthew 21:5, it was fulfilled literally in every way. The word was colt, and it was in fact a colt.

II. No literal and spiritual interpretation within the same sentence,

verse or section John 3:5b; Matt. 3:11:

John 3:5b …Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Matt. 3:11 I baptize you in water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is stronger than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He Himself will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire,

Matt. 3:12 Whose winnowing fan is in His hand. And He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor and will gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire.

A. Example 1: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5b). Many Bible expositors have interpreted the water here spiritually as referring to the word of God. However, in the next phrase, they take the Spirit literally, referring to it as the Holy Spirit. This kind of interpretation is wrong and is against the principle of Bible interpretation.

B. Example 2: "I baptize you in water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me…He Himself will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire, Whose winnowing fan is in His hand…but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire." (Matt. 3:11-12). Some expositors have interpreted the fire here spiritually as tribulations and trials. Some have even interpreted this to be the Holy Spirit burning as a fire. All these have interpreted the word fire spiritually. But in this verse, the water mentioned by John is actual water, and the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit, literally Therefore, the fire in the latter part should not be interpreted spiritually, but rather, literally.

III. One portion not sufficient to represent a whole truth—Matt. 4:5-7:

Matt. 4:5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and set Him on the wing of the temple,

Matt. 4:6 And said to Him, If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down; for it is written, "To His angels He shall give charge concerning You, and on their hands they shall bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone."

Matt. 4:7 Jesus said to him, Again, it is written, "You shall not test the Lord your God."

Example: "Jesus said to him, Again, it is written…" (Matt. 4:7). In reading

and interpreting the Bible, we should pay attention to the words "again it is written." When the Lord was tempted…the devil tempted the Lord Jesus with an isolated passage of the Old Testament. When the Lord heard that, He answered right away, "Again it is written, You shall not tempt the Lord your God." Any one portion of the Bible cannot represent the whole truth, and we have to be balanced in every way. Hence, we have to remember the principle of "again it is written."

IV. Every verse containing all the truths—Gen. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:20:

Gen. 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 Pet. 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of one's own interpretation.

A. No single verse can include the whole truth, and to understand a truth, one cannot rely on one verse alone, but has to consider many other verses. On the other hand, in determining any truth, one has to consider every verse. Each verse in the Bible contains all the truths.

B. Any single verse in the Bible requires the whole Bible to explain it. If one wants to understand Genesis 1:1, he has to understand the whole Bible. On the one hand, Genesis 1:1 cannot contain the whole truth. On the other hand, Genesis 1:1 includes all the truths of the Bible—Gen. 1:1.

Gen. 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

C. In determining any truth, we cannot rely on one portion of the Bible alone. Instead, we have to depend on all the words of the Bible—2 Pet. 1:20.

2 Pet. 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of one's own interpretation;

V. Not sacrificing any portion of the word.

A. In determining a truth, sometimes many related verses indicate a certain meaning, but two or three among them cannot be explained in that kind of way. One cannot say that because there were only one or two verses that could not be explained that way, one can therefore sacrifice them and base the exposition on the majority of the verses. If one does that, he is sacrificing a small number of verses. We cannot do this.

B. We have to respect every portion of the Bible. Only when an interpretation harmonizes with the whole Bible can this interpretation be considered reliable.

VI. All appositional expressions being equal—Matt. 5:3-11; Isa. 9:6:

Matt. 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
Matt. 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Matt.5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
Matt. 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
Matt. 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.
Matt. 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Matt. 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.
Matt.5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
Matt.5:11 Blessed are you when they reproach and persecute you, and while speaking lies, say every evil thing against you because of Me.
Isa. 9:6 For a child is born to us, / A Son is given to us; / And the government / Is upon His shoulder; / And His name will be called / Wonderful Counselor, / Mighty God, / Eternal Father, / Prince of Peace.

A. Example 1: Matthew 5 speaks of nine blessings. It says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." And " Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." These are matching expressions, with the first expression matching the second one.

B. Example 2: Isaiah 9:6 is written in the Hebrew poetic way of expression, and its pairs—...a child...A Son...And His name will be called...Mighty God,...Eternal Father...—state that the Son is the Father.

VII. Neither being confined by the background nor ignoring the background—Matt. 5:23-24:

Matt. 5:23 Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you,
Matt. 5:24 Leave your gift there before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Example: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has anything against you, Leave your gift there before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to your brother,

and then come and offer your gift." (Matt. 5:23 24). In the Lord's sermon on the mount, many words are spoken with a Jewish background. This offering of the gift at the altar is based wholly on the background of Judaism. If you grasp hold of this principle, you will realize that the Lord's words refer to a man offering something before God and fellowshipping with God. On the other hand, we should not be confined to the background. We cannot teach people to go to the altar to offer gifts now just because the Lord Jesus has spoken such a word. If you are confined by this background, you will have a big problem.

VIII. Paying attention to the differences in the dispensations—Exo. 20:8; Mark 2:27-28; Matt. 19:21:

Exo. 20:8 Remember the Sabbath day so as to sanctify it.

Mark 2:27 And He said to them, The Sabbath came into being for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

Mark 2:28 So then the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Matt.19:21 Jesus said to him, If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in the heavens; and come, follow Me.

A. Example 1: Sabbath—God's word to man is divided into dispensations. When we try to understand these words, we must differentiate between the different dispensations. We should not apply the words spoken in the dispensation of the law to the dispensation of grace. Keeping the Sabbath is a commandment that God gave to man in the dispensation of the law. When one comes to the age of grace, it is a different matter altogether, this is a matter in the dispensation of the law and not in the dispensation of grace.

B. Example 2: Prosper and enlarged territory—God promised His chosen people in the Old Testament that they would prosper and enlarge their territory on the earth. But it is exactly the opposite in the New Testament. There is such a promise in the Bible, but this promise is not under grace, but under the law. In the New Testament age, God said that we should forsake our land and sell it to give to the poor. This is exactly opposite to the Old Testament age—Matt. 19:21.

IX. Taking care of the difference in the persons being addressed—1 Cor. 10:32:

1 Cor. 10:32 Do not become a stumbling block, both to Jews and to Greeks and to the church of God;

A. Example 1: First Corinthians 10:32 says, "Give no occasion of stumbling both to Jews and to Greeks [referring to nations] and to the church of God." In the Bible, there are at least these three kinds of people to whom God speaks His words: the Jews, the nations, and the church. In the Old Testament, the majority of the words were spoken to the Jews. In the New Testament, there are many words that are spoken to the church. At the same time, whether in the New Testament or the Old, there are some words spoken to the nations.

B. Example 2: Matt. 24:1-31 are spoken to the Jews. Matt. 24:32 to 25:30 is spoken to the church. Matt. 25:31 to 46 is spoken to the nations.

Matt. 24:1—25:46 be omitted.

X. Persons, events, and objects in the Old Testament not clearly referred to as types not to be treated as types but as illustrations.

A. In the Old Testament, many persons, events, and objects are types. We have to find out the clear evidence from the New Testament. If there is no mention in the New Testament of the object, the events, or the person as a type, then we should not rashly surmise that they are a type. At the most, we can only borrow these persons, events, and objects as illustrations and use them to explain the truths in the New Testament.

B. Example: Isaac, who typified the Lord Jesus as the inheriting son, and Rebecca, who typified the bride gained by Christ—the church. The Passover of the Israelites which signifies our salvation before God when we received the slain Christ as our Savior. The children of Israel's exodus from Egypt, which signifies our going out from the world. The lamb typifying Christ and the brass serpent also typifying Christ.

REFERENCE

On Knowing the Bible, Ch. 4; Elders' Training, Book 4, Ch. 1.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

If we want to study the Bible, we have to understand the Bible. In order to understand the Bible, we need to interpret it. If there is no interpretation and no explanation, naturally we will have no way to understand the Bible. We know everything has its own principles. The more esteemed and important a matter is, the stricter are its governing principles and laws…The Bible is an extremely great item in the universe. Besides our Lord and God of glory, I believe the greatest item in the universe is the Bible we have before our eyes and in our hands. Since the Bible is so important, we need the proper interpretation before we can study or understand it. This interpretation must be governed by definite rules, laws, and principles. We cannot interpret it in this or that or any way we like. (On Knowing the Bible, p. 53)

All rules are a kind of protection. If a train has no railroad tracks to run on, not only will it be unable to run smoothly, but it will also be without protection. When there are railroad tracks, the train will move smoothly and will have the proper protection. This is the same way with the study of the Bible. If one studies the Bible and expounds it blindly and carelessly, the result will be inconceivable and even dangerous. Our thoughts often have no restraints. It is very dangerous for a person to judge according to what he thinks and to interpret according to what he perceives. If we want to study the Bible properly and understand it accurately, there must be the restrictive interpretation. If we want a restrictive exposition of the Bible, we need to find out the principles and laws of Bible interpretation. Here we will point out ten such principles.

AS LITERALLY AS POSSIBLE

The first principle is to interpret and understand the Bible as literally as possible. We have to grasp firmly the fact that when God inspired men to write the Bible, He used words that are fully comprehensible to man. When we attempt to understandable the Bible today, we must understand the

thought of God strictly and accurately according to the letter of the words. We should not think that since the Bible is inspired by God, it will always transcend human language, and is therefore open for spiritual interpretation. This is a dangerous proposition. We should interpret the Bible according to the literal meaning of the words. No matter how difficult or out of place a literal interpretation appears to us, we have to adhere strictly to the literal meaning. (On Knowing the Bible, pp. 53-54)

One has to consider carefully whether a passage should be interpreted literally or spiritually…We should hold fast to the principles and adhere to the literal meanings as much as possible. It is only when a literal interpretation of some words in some visions, prophesies, and parables becomes too absurd and silly that we can interpret them spiritually. (On Knowing the Bible, p. 55)

NO LITERAL AND SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION WITHIN THE SAME SENTENCE VERSE OR SECTION

We cannot interpret a sentence, a verse, or a section of the Bible spiritually for the first part and literally for the second part. We should not do that the other way around either. If a passage is to be interpreted spiritually, it should be interpreted spiritually throughout. If a passage is to be interpreted literally, it must be interpreted literally throughout. For example, the Lord Jesus said in John 3 that unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Many Bible expositors have interpreted the water here spiritually as referring to the word of God. However, in the next phrase, they take the Spirit literally, referring to it as the Holy Spirit. This kind of interpretation is wrong and is against the principle of Bible interpretation. If one would interpret the Spirit in the second part literally, he must interpret the water in the first part literally also. If one interprets the water spiritually, he must interpret the Spirit spiritually also. Since one cannot interpret the Spirit spiritually, neither can he interpret the water spiritually; it must be interpreted literally…This is an important principle in the interpretation of the Bible.

For the different parts within a same passage, either they must all be interpreted literally, or they must all be interpreted spiritually. They cannot be interpreted both ways. (On Knowing the Bible, pp. 56-57)

ONE PORTION NOT SUFFICIENT TO PRESENT A WHOLE TRUTH

In interpreting the Bible, we have to pay attention to one more thing: one portion of the Word is not sufficient to represent the whole truth. In other words, there is no truth that can be fully explained in a single portion of the Word. Therefore, in reading and interpreting the Bible, we should pay attention to the words "again it is written." This is the word spoken by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 4:7. When the Lord was tempted,…the devil tempted the Lord Jesus with an isolated passage of the passage of the Old Testament. When the Lord heard that, He answered right away, "Again it is written, You shall not tempt the Lord your God." This shows us that we cannot consider one isolated portion of the Bible alone. Instead, we must consider two, three, or more portions of the Word together.

If we neglect the principle of "again it is written," but apply the words of the Bible in an isolated way, we will easily be deceived by the wiles of the devil. If the devil cannot stop someone from following the Bible, he will cause that one to quote the Bible in an isolated way…This shows us that when we follow the Bible, we should not do so in an isolated way. We should consider both sides and even all sides. No single portion of the Bible can represent the whole truth…Any single side of a man cannot represent the whole person. The same can be said of the words of the Bible. Any one portion of the Bible cannot represent the whole truth, and we have to be balanced in every way. Hence, we have to remember the principle of "again it is written." (On Knowing the Bible, pp. 57-58)

EVERY VERSE CONTAINING ALL THE TRUTHS

No single verse can represent the whole truth. However, every verse of the Bible contains all the truths. On the one hand, no single verse can

include the whole truth, and to understand a truth, one cannot rely on one verse alone, but has to consider many other verses. On the other hand, in determining any truth, one has to consider every verse. Each verse in the Bible contains all the truths.

One brother once said that any single verse in the Bible requires the whole Bible to explain it. This is very true. If one wants to understand Genesis 1:1, he has to understand the whole Bible. On the one hand, Genesis 1:1 cannot contain the whole truth. On the other hand, Genesis 1:1 includes all the truths of the Bible.

Therefore, in determining any truth, we cannot rely on one portion of the Bible alone. Instead, we have to depend on all the words of the Bible. In a similar way, the exposition of any single verse cannot be based on the whole Bible. Second Peter 1:20 says that no prophecy of the Scripture is of one's own interpretation. The original meaning of this verse is that the prophecy of the Bible should not be interpreted according to its own context. This means that to interpret any prophecy, one has to study all the prophecies in the Bible, and has to make decisions based on all the prophecies of the Bible. Only then will the interpretation be complete. (On Knowing the Bible, pp. 58-59)

NOT SACRIFICING ANY PORTION OF THE WORD

In determining a truth, sometimes many related verses indicate a certain meaning, but two or three among them cannot be explained in that kind of way. One cannot say that because there were only one or two verses that could not be explained that way, one can therefore sacrifice them and base the exposition on the majority of the verses. If one does that, he is sacrificing a small number of verses. We cannot do this. As long as one or two verses do not allow a certain interpretation, we have to give up that interpretation. We have to respect every portion of the Bible. Only when an interpretation harmonizes with the whole Bible can this interpretation be considered reliable. Any verse that forbids a certain interpretation of the truth must not be sacrificed. Instead, that certain interpretation must be

abandoned, and we must wait for God's further revelation. If we study the Bible this way, we will not fall easily into error. (On Knowing the Bible, p. 59)

ALL APPOSITIONAL EXPRESSIONS BEING EQUAL

There are many expressions in the Bible that are in apposition one to another. All these appositional expressions are equal are not different. For example, Matthew 5 speaks of nine blessings. It says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens," and "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." These are matching expressions, with the first expression matching the second one. In this case, with every blessing, there is first the condition for blessing and then the blessing itself. All matching expressions are equal. If the first part of one expression specifies a condition, then all first parts of matching expressions specify conditions also. If the second part of one expression specifies a blessing, then the second parts of all expressions specify blessings also. This is another principle or rule. (On Knowing the Bible, p.59.)

Isaiah 9:6…is written in the Hebrew poetic way of expression, and Hebrew poetry goes often in pairs, the first two clauses, "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," form one pair….a child is born, but a son is given….the son as the son of Mary with the human nature was born, and the so as the Son of the Most High with the divine nature was given through the son of Mary's being born. This wonderful Son was not only born of the human source, but also given from the divine source. He is both human and divine. This is the very God-promised Messiah to Israel (John 1:41, 45), who is Jehovah Himself to become, by being born of a human virgin (Isa. 7:14), a man by the name Jesus-Jehovah the Savior (Matt. 1:21-23) to be the Christ in God's New Testament economy (Matt. 1:16). As such a one, His name is called; "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, Father of eternity, The prince of Peace." According to the composition, "Wonderful Counselor" and "mighty God" should be one pair, and "Father of eternity" and "Prince of peace" should be another pair. This Wonderful

Messiah, …the mighty God, who is able to carry out whatever counsel He makes for them as their Counselor. In addition, He is also their Father, from eternity as their source. He is also a Prince to them, who is their peace, gives them peace, and brings them into peace.

"Father of eternity" does not indicate eternity's Father, but the eternal Father, just like "Prince of peace" does not indicate peace's Prince, but the peaceful Prince….whatever Messiah is, is His people's. He is His people's Wonderful Counselor, His people's mighty God, His people's peaceful Prince, and His people's eternal Father, not eternity's Father. The Father of eternity in this verse must be the Son to be the eternal Father of His people. (Elders' Training, Book 4, 16 17)

NEITHER BEING CONFINED BY THE BACKGROUND NOR IGNORING THE BACKGROUND

In interpreting the Bible, one should not be confined by the background, nor should he ignore the background. For example, in the Lord's sermon on the mount, many words are spoken with a Jewish background. The Lord says, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has anything against you," (Matt. 5:23) and so on. This offering of the gift at the altar is based wholly on the background of Judaism. If you want to understand the original meaning of this word, you cannot neglect the background of the time. The Jews offered their gift at the altar then for the purpose of drawing nigh to God and fellowshipping with Him. If you grasp hold of this principle, you will realize that the Lord's words refer to a man offering something before God and fellowshipping with God.

On the other hand, we should not be confined to the background. We cannot teach people to go to the altar to offer gifts now just because the Lord Jesus has spoken such a word. If you are confined by this background, you will have a big problem. Hence, we must see that we cannot neglect the background; if we do, we will not understand the exact meaning of the Bible. On the other hand, we must be careful not to be confined to the

background lest we fall into error. (On Knowing the Bible, p.60)

PAYING ATTENTIO TO THE DIFFERENCES IN THE DISPENSATIONS

God's words to man are divided into dispensations. Some words were spoken by God to man in the dispensation of the law. Some words were spoken by God to man in the dispensation of grace. When we try to understand these words, we must differentiate between the different dispensations. We should not apply the words spoken in the dispensation of the law to the dispensation of grace. This is the mistake of the Seventh-Day Adventists in keeping the Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath is a commandment that God gave to man in the dispensation of the law. When one comes to the age of grace, it is a different matter altogether. But the Seventh-Day Adventists hold on to Exodus 20 and say that since God clearly spoke about the Sabbath, we should therefore keep the Sabbath today. It is true that God spoke of keeping the Sabbath, but this is a matter in the dispensation of the law and not in the dispensation of grace….In the same principle, God promised His chosen people in the Old Testament that they would prosper and enlarge their territory on the earth. But it is exactly the opposite in the New Testament…There is such a promise in the Bible, but this promise is not under grace, but under the law. In the New Testament age, God said that we should forsake our land and sell it to give to the poor (Matt.19:21). This is exactly opposite to the Old Testament age.

Although all these are words of the Bible and are all inspired by God, we should not take the words of the old dispensation and apply them to the present dispensation. The Catholics and many Protestants err on this point. There are many things in Catholicism that come from Judaism in the Old Testament. Even the clothing worn by their priests and their rituals of worship are all a borrowing of the principle of the Old Testament. Surely those things are mentioned in the Bible, but they are not for our present dispensation. In expounding and interpreting the Bible, one cannot say, "Is not this the word of the Bible? If it so, we should keep it." We cannot speak

in this way. We have to differentiate the ages; that is, we have to know clearly to which dispensation a word belongs. If you are not in a certain dispensation, then the words for that dispensation have nothing to do with you. (On Knowing the Bible, pp. 60-61)

TAKING CARE OF THE DIFFERENCE IN THE PERSONS BEING ADDRESSED

In expounding the Bible, one has to take care of the persons to whom a word is spoken. Some words are spoken to the Jews, and they are not related to the nations or to the church. Some words are spoken to the nations and have nothing to do with the Jews or with the church. Some words are spoken to the church and have nothing to do with the Jews or with the nations.

First Corinthians 10:32 says, "Give no occasion of stumbling both to Jews and to Greeks [referring to nations] and to the church of God." In the Bible, there are at least these three kinds of people to whom God speaks His words: the Jews, the nations, and the church. In the Old Testament, the majority of the words were spoken to the Jews. In the New Testament, there are many words that are spoken to the church. At the same time, whether in the New Testament or the Old, there are some words spoken to the nations. We should differentiate between these when we read them and should find out to whom the words are spoken. We should differentiate clearly between the different persons to whom a word is addressed, whether it is to the Jews, to the nations, or to the church. First we identify the persons spoken to, then we can make the proper judgment. (On Knowing the Bible, pp. 60-62)

For example, some Bible scholars have had strong disputes concerning whom the book of Matthew was addressed to. There are many expositors who assert that Matthew was for the Jews and not for the church. They point out the Jewish background of the words in Matthew, saying that the Lord Jesus was clearly referring to offering gifts at the altar. To them this is a proof that these words are for the Jews. The Lord Jesus clearly spoke

about the judgment of the Sanhedrin was an organization of the Jews. They also point out Matthew 24 which mentions the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. To them the holy place clearly belongs to the Jews. The Lord also said that when one encounters the great tribulation, he should pray that his flight may not be on a Sabbath. Would the church still keep the Sabbath? Since these people who receive the word keep the Sabbath, are they not Jews? These scholars point out many examples like these to prove that the book of Matthew is spoken to the Jews. If it were so, this would be very serious, because the whole book of Matthew would no longer be our inheritance.

After we read through the book of Matthew carefully, we have to admit that the words in Matthew 5 certainly have their Jewish background, but they are not spoken to the Jews; rather, they are spoken to the people of the kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom people not only include the saved ones among the Jews, but they also include the converted ones from among the nations. The kingdom people are the church. Because among the kingdom people there were some who had formerly been in Judaism, and who had a Jewish background, the Lord Jesus had to use things related to that background when He gave the sermon on the mount at that time. There are more discussions in chapters twenty-four and twenty-five of Matthew. If you read carefully, you will find that a portion was spoken to the Jews, a portion was spoken to the church, and a portion was spoken to the nations. In chapter twenty-four, verses 1 through 30 are spoken to the Jews. Verse 32 to chapter twenty-five verse 30 is spoken to the church. Verse 31 to the end of the chapter is spoken to the nations. In studying the Bible, before we make a decision on an interpretation, we must first ascertain the person to whom a word is spoken. Only then can we understand and interpret the words accurately. (On Knowing the Bible, pp. 62-63)

PERSONS, EVENTS, AND OBJECTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT NOT CLEARLY REFERRED TO AS TYPES

NOT TO BE TREATED AS TYPES BUT AS ILLUSTRATIONS

We know that there are many types in the Old Testament. Some types are simply individual persons, such as Isaac, who typified the Lord Jesus as the inheriting son, and Rebecca, who typified the bride gained by Christ—the Church. Some types are events, such as the Passover of the Israelites, which signifies our Savior. Another example is the children of Israel's exodus from Egypt, which signifies our going out from the world. There are also some types that are objects such as the lamb typifying Christ and the brass serpent also typifying Christ.

In the Old Testament, many persons, events, and objects are types, but it is not up to us to decide whether or not they are types. We have to find out the clear evidence from the New Testament. If there is no mention in the New Testament of the object, the events, or the person as the type, then we should not rashly surmise that they are a type. At the most, we can only borrow these persons, events, and objects as illustrations and use them to explain the truths in the New Testament. To say that something is a type means more than to say that it is merely an illustration. (On Knowing the Bible, p. 64)

Here we are only presenting and pointing out briefly these ten principles of interpretation of the Bible. These principles have evolved gradually from hundreds or thousands of years of experience of Bible study. They are like the cream of the milk and the honey of the bees, and are very precious. I hope we can all remember them clearly. These all are our aids and restrictions. I hope that from now on all the brothers and sisters will apply these principles in their study of the Bible. If we apply them, we will find new meaning to the Bible and will have a better, more accurate, and thorough understanding. (On Knowing the Bible, p. 64)

QUESTIONS

1. Please explain briefly the ten principles of interpreting the Bible according to this lesson.

2. Please choose two or three of the principles and use the examples to explain each of the principles.

3. Please use the verses of New Testament Recovery Version, its footnotes, and cross-references to find some examples which can apply to the principles of interpreting the Bible.

LESSON FOUR

THE PRINCIPLES IN INTERPRETING THE BIBLE (2)

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God.

Jer. 15:16a Your words were found and I ate them, And Your word became to me The gladness and joy of my heart,…

2 Cor. 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Hymn: 806

OUTLINE

XI. Understanding the Word of God literally.

XII. Pray-reading the Word of God with our spirit—Eph. 6:17.

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God.

XIII. Eating, drinking, and breathing the spirit and the life in the Word of God—Jer. 15:16a; 2 Pet. 2:2; 2 Tim. 3:16.

Jer. 15:16 Your words were found and I ate them, And Your word became to me The gladness and joy of my heart,…

1 Pet. 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation.

2 Tim.3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

XIV. Going beyond the letter, historical events, and persons and things to explore and to receive the revelation of life—2 Cor. 3:6.

2 Cor. 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

XV. Paying attention to the context in reading the Bible.

XVI. Using God's word to interpret God's word.

XVII. Learning from the saints of the past.

A. Depend much on the teaching of the Brethren (Their teaching is the higher theology.).

B. Knowing and becoming familiar with the school of the inner life people.

C. Receiving Calvin's revelation of God's predestination.

D. Rejecting the Arminian doctrine of human responsibility.

E. Practicing the truth of the kingdom reward and punishment.

REFERENCE

The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, Chs. 2-4.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

UNDERSTANDING THE WORD OF GOD LITERALLY

When we read the Bible, the first way to understand the Word of God is to comprehend it literally. We must comprehend whatever the Bible says and never be distracted from the main thought. When we read the Bible, we should not interpret arbitrarily a passage that we do not understand, thus departing from the meaning of the Word. Many people study the Bible and spiritualize their interpretation of it. For example, John 3:5 says, "Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit…" There is a group of people who feel that "water" here is difficult to interpret, so they take it as a sign, a symbol, and assume that the water refers to God's word. According to Ephesians 5:26, which refers to " the water in the word, " they say that to be born of the Spirit through the word. Although this kind of spiritualizing in the interpretation of the Bible is not bad and seems to be consistent with the Bible, it does have its problems. If this interpretation of John 3:5 were true, why did the Lord Jesus not tell Nicodemus plainly at the beginning that a man must be born of the word, instead of telling him that a man must

be born of water? By asking such a question, we can see that the interpretation of "water" as " the word" is unacceptable. Thus, we can see that we need to try our best to understand the Bible literally. (The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, p. 21)

PRAY-READING THE WORD OF GOD WITH OUR SPIRIT

We need to pray-read, converting all that we see and all that we comprehend into prayer. When we pray, we use our spirit. At first, we may use our mind to pray, but after three to five sentences our spirit will rise up. This is a definite fact. Therefore, never forget that the essence of the Word of God is God's breathing out. When you read it, you should breathe it in. On God's side, it is a matter of His breathing out; on our side, it is a matter of our breathing in. The spiritual breath comes out of Him and enters into us. That which comes out of Him and enters into us is the spiritual breath. The Word of God is spirit and life. Our mind cannot touch the Spirit; only our spirit can touch the Spirit. If we do not touch the Spirit, we do not have life. Only by touching the Spirit can we have life. Ultimately, this life is Christ, and it is also God Himself….At first, we do not need to explain what we read, nor do we need to understand it; we only need to pray-read the Word literally. When we pray-read, our spirit touches the Spirit of the Bible, and thus we receive life. (The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, p. 23)

EATING, DRINKING, AND BREATHING THE SPIRIT AND THE LIFE IN THE WORD OF GOD

The matter of pray-reading to eat, drink, and breathe the Spirit and the life in the Word of God is seen in the word of the Bible; hence, pray-reading is not superstitious. When we pray-read, the word in letters becomes spirit and life, that is, the Lord Himself. To pray-read is to receive "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition" (Eph. 6:17 18). Whenever we receive the Word of God by pray-reading, the result is that we eat, drink, and breathe in the Spirit and the life in God's Word. Even an Old Testament saint, Jeremiah, also said, "Thy words were

found, and I did eat them" (Jer. 15:16). The Word of God is edible; hence, it is our food. Therefore, we must "long for the guileless milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2)…In addition, God's Word is also God's breathing out. When we breathe in God's Word, breathing in what God has breathed out, we receive Him. It is clear, then, that to pray-read is to eat, to drink, and to breathe, and the more consistently we practice it, the better. (The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, p. 24)

GOING BEYONG THE LETTER, HISTORICAL EVENTS, AND PERSONS AND THINGS TO EXPLORE AND TO RECEIVE THE REVELATION OF LIFE

In order to study the Bible, we must go beyond the letter, that is, the letter in the law. For example, the Seventh Day Adventists hold on to the letter in the Bible: Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." However, Paul said, " The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). This word should be applied to the matter of the keeping of the Sabbath. "The letter" requires people to keep the Sabbath, but the spiritual meaning of keeping the Sabbath is that God wants whoever is laboring and is burdened to obtain rest. Hence, it is not a matter of keeping the letter, but of receiving the Spirit. According to the spiritual meaning, the Sabbath is the rest that God has established for those who are heavily burdened, and this Sabbath is just the Lord Christ. It is not surprising that the Lord said, "Come to Me all who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). This is today's Sabbath. Similarly, regarding the matter of circumcision, to require people to be circumcised on the eighth day is merely the letter. The spiritual meaning of circumcision is to terminate our flesh, to deny our natural life. The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. The Spirit goes beyond the letter and also beyond the historical events. (pp. 26-27)

It is not sufficient to know the Bible in the way of understanding the meaning of each word in the original language; we must see the light revealed by the meaning of each word in the original language. For example, when the Sadducees argued with the Lord Jesus, saying that there

was no resurrection, the Lord Jesus answered, “Concerning the dead, that they are raised, did you not read in the book of Moses, at the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?” (Mark 12:26). In reading the phrase “the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” the Lord saw the matter of resurrection. He said, “ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (v. 27). Apparently these men are dead, but since God is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, they will be resurrected. This was the way in which the Lord Jesus read the Bible. He had the divine light To study the Bible, we need light, which does not come by studying the letters. If we desire to go beyond the letters and seek the revelation of life, we need enlightenment. (The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, pp. 32-33)

PAYING ATTENTION TO THE CONTEXT IN READING THE BIBLE

Paying attention to the context requires much consideration, because there are no specific limits as to the boundary of a passage. A prominent Bible scholar has said that in order to expound a single sentence of the Bible, one needs to use the entire Bible. This means that we need all sixty-six books of the Bible to explain a verse. For example, in Matthew 18:20 the Lord said, “for where two or three are gathered together into My name, there I am in their midst.” I would say that this verse concerns the building up of the local church. How can I be so bold to say this? Because the entire context of Matthew 18 reveals this. Not only so, if we read the entire context of this chapter, we must admit that the Lord’s word “gathered together into My name” is related to recovering the brothers who have committed wrongdoings, and this is surely for building up. In chapter sixteen, the Lord said, “On this rock I will build My church” (v. 18), but He did not mention there how to build the church. Chapter eighteen, however, reveals to us that the way to build the church is to gather together into the name of the Lord. Not a great number of saints, but a

small number, even two or three, may meet together to recover some brothers. To recover the brothers is to build up the brothers. To make peace, to forgive, and to be understanding of the brothers is the building up.

We can have such a definitive interpretation of these verses in Matthew 18 because of their context. Therefore, I would say that studying the Bible is not a simple matter, and comprehending the Bible is even more difficult. In order to comprehend one verse, you may have to research the entire Bible. It is just like a lawyer who cannot make a decision on a legal case according to only a single code of the law. In fact, all the codes are related to each other. A good lawyer is one who not only knows the law in depth but also can assimilate and use it in a comprehensive manner. (pp. 37-38)

USING GOD'S WORD TO INTERPRET GOD'S WORD

In general, Bible scholars use the Word of God to explain God's Word; this is to use the Bible to interpret the Bible. For example, some may interpret the word "water" in John 3:5 in a spiritual way, considering the water as God's word, because according to James 1:18, God "brought us forth by the word of truth." First Peter 1:23 says, "Having been regenerated, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God." Ephesians also mentions the water in the word" (5:26). We have already pointed out that this exposition of the word "water" in John 3:5 is not right; it is not according to the literal meaning of the word but is interpreted in a spiritual way. Others even say that this "water" is the water in a mother's womb. This interpretation is too literal. It is not wrong to expound the Word literally, but it must be done not in a natural way or according to human concepts. From the context of this verse, we can see that the Lord Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus, a Pharisee, who must have heard what John the Baptist had said to the Pharisees: "I indeed baptize you with water, but He who is stronger than I is coming….He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit" (Luke 3:16). Thus, we must have a way to determine the appropriate context of a verse. When the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus

that he must be "born of water and the Spirit," He meant, "You must accept the baptism of repentance preached by John the Baptist. First you must repent; then he will put you fully into the water to bury you, and I will come after him to baptize you with the Spirit to enliven you." This is death and resurrection. The old man dies and is buried, and the new man is resurrected. Is this not the real significance of being born anew? So you see, this interpretation is according to the literal understanding, yet not in a natural way. Therefore, whenever you encounter a sentence in the Bible and you do not understand its meaning, do not try to figure it out by thinking this way or that way. You should go to the entire Bible to see what is said concerning this sentence; that is to use the words of the Bible to expound the Word. (pp. 38-39)

LEARNING FROM THE SAINTS OF THE PAST

We also need to learn from the saints of the past. We must realize that we were not born in the first century; we are not the first group of Bible readers. We were born in the twentieth century, and we cannot ignore those who have gone before us. We cannot work in isolation from them. We must see how the so-called church fathers, from the end of the first century to the second century, interpreted the Bible,. Since then, in generation after generation there have been bible scholars. During the time of the Reformation, Wycliffe and his contemporaries rose up; then Luther consummated their teachings. They all had various interpretations concerning the Bible. Afterwards, a number of different schools emerged. Today we are standing on their shoulders, and a great deal of our knowledge of the Bible has been gained from them. (p. 39)

Depending Much On The Teaching Of The Brethen

During…in the late 1830s, the Lord raised up the Brethren in England. They had many Bible teachers; the first among them was John Nelson Darby. There were also C. H. Mackintosh and William Kelly. First, they unlocked many biblical principles; second, they unlocked the types; third,

they unlocked the prophecies; fourth, they unlocked the dispensations; and fifth, they unlocked the proper knowledge concerning the Triune God and the Person of Christ. Finally, they also unlocked the truth concerning the church. These are the six conclusions we can obtain through their writing.

First, they unlocked the principles of the Bible. There is one set of principles for the books of the Old Testament and another set of principles for the books of the New Testament. The culmination of Darby's writings was the five-volume commentary on the Bible called Synopsis of the Books of the Bible. He abstracted every book in the Bible and found the underlying principles in each book. This was his greatest strength; this was also where I received the most help. (p. 41)

Knowing and Becoming familiar with the school of the inner life people

One hundred years after Luther's Reformation, Protestantism became dead, just as in the epistle of the Lord Jesus to the church in Sardis: "You have a name that you are living, and you are dead" (Rev. 3:1). Around that time a group of people in the Catholic church who loved the lord began to pursue the inner life. They are known in church history as the mystics. The leading ones among them were Fenelon, Thomas Campbell, Madame Guyon, who was most influential, and Brother Lawrence, who was a cook in the army. They had a deep knowledge concerning the inner life to such an extent that their writings could not be practiced by common people. After a period of time, a brother name William Law, who was a scholar from England, edited the books of the mystics. This allowed many people to benefit from them. After this, Andrew Murray further improved the writings of the mystics by using plain words to bring out the deep truth. His book The Spirit of Christ was his masterpiece.

After Andrew Murray there was Jessie Penn-Lewis. She was also of the inner life group. Many portions of the Spiritual Man, which was written by Brother Nee, are translations of her books. After Jessie Penn-Lewis came T. Austin-Sparks. He could also be counted among the inner life group. All the

above-mentioned persons could be categorized as Bible scholars. Besides these, in the 1860s there was a couple in England named Smith. Mrs. Smith wrote a book called The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life. This couple started a conference in Keswick, which rapidly developed into the best among the Christian conferences in England. The speakers there included many Bible scholars. (pp. 52-53)

Receiving Calvin's Revelation of God's Predestination

In addition, there are also two theological schools. One is the Calvinist school of predestination, which I call the revelation of God's predestination. Calvin saw that our salvation was not initiated by ourselves, but rather that we have been selected and predestinated by God before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-5).This predestination is eternal and unchangeable; therefore, the saved ones will never perish. On the other hand, those of the Arminian school believe that whether we are saved eternally or not depends upon ourselves, that is, that we are responsible for our salvation. Therefore, we must do our best to walk according to God's will, or else we may still perish. I call this "elevator salvation": when we are saved we are up; when we sin we are down. The Baptist church accepts Calvin's revelation of God's predestination, and so do the Presbyterians. The Pentecostals, holiness groups, and the Assemblies of God are mostly Arminian in that they emphasize human responsibility and ignore God's selection. This is heresy. Calvin saw the revelation of God's predestination, and this is right.

Rejecting the Arminian Doctrine of Human Responsibility

These two schools are always in conflict with each other. The Arminian doctrine is mainly based upon the five warnings recorded in Hebrews and the warnings given by the Lord Jesus in the gospel of Matthew. For example, if we fail to be a faithful servant, when the Master comes back, we will be punished and cast into outer darkness, where there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth (Matt. 24:45-51; 25;14-30). Based upon

these verses, they claim that even a saved one can perish. (pp. 44-45)

The Arminians…believe that even though our salvation is by God's grace, if we do not fulfill our responsibility after being saved, we will lose our salvation. Therefore, in their view salvation is not once for all; after being saved we still may perish. But if we repent, we can be saved again. This concept totally emphasizes man's responsibility, and it is therefore called the doctrine of human responsibility. Of these two schools, we accept the former totally, and reject the latter entirely. Then how can we resolve the dispute between these two schools? How can't hey be balanced? According to the history of theology, after Calvin and Arminius, another group of theologians emerged, beginning from Govett, then Panton, and then Pember. Their school has formed a line concerning the truth of the kingdom in the New Testament. They saw that once a person is saved he will not perish forever (John 10:28). However, in order to encourage those who follow Him faithfully after salvation, God had set up a kingdom full of requirements to be their reward. If one is faithful, he will be rewarded (Matt. 24:45-47; 25:19-23). If one is not faithful, he will be punished and will lose the kingdom, but he himself will still be saved (Matt. 24:48-51; 25:24-30; 1 Cor. 3:10, 12-15). This is called the truth of the kingdom reward and punishment. (pp. 55-56)

Practicing the Truth of the Kingdom Reward and Punishment

People like Govett, Panton, and Pember rose up. Their doctrine stands between the revelation of God's predestination and teaching of human responsibility. They saw the truth concerning the kingdom. They said that after being saved, we are saved forever and will never perish. But we must follow the Lord faithfully; then when the Lord comes back, we will receive the kingdom as a reward. If we are not faithful, we will not be able to enter the kingdom and we will suffer loss. This is based on 1 Corinthians 3, which says that we should be careful about how we build (vv. 10-15). Are we building with wood, grass, and stubble? If we build with gold, silver, and precious stones, when the Lord comes back, we will be rewarded in

addition to our salvation. On the other hand, if we build with wood, grass, and stubble, our work will be burned by the fire of judgment, and we will suffer loss but not eternal perdition: “But he shall be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Cor. 3:15).

Many proofs in the New Testament concerning the kingdom reward and punishment were initially seen by Govett and Panton. What I have mentioned thus far is not my imagination. I am also a student of the Bible. I have studied this book for sixty years; this is why I am able to explain it to you. The Bible expositors of the past can be grouped into these several schools. We have studied them and would like to present them to you for your learning. When we began to expound the Bible, we profited a great deal from the saints before us. We have seen that the highest theology is that held by the Brethren. Once you have their theology, you can put aside all the others. What I have said is based on this high theology. Brothers and sisters, all that I have spoken to you describes the way of studying the Bible which we have learned during the past sixty years. (p. 45)

QUESTIONS

1. How does one receive life and revelation in the interpretation of the Bible?

2. What is the proper way to interpret one single verse of the Bible?

3. Please briefly explain how we can learn from the saints of the past.

LESSON FIVE

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE—AN ADEQUATE PERSON

Scripture Reading:

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

I Cor. 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things with spiritual words.

Heb. 5:14 But solid food is for the full-grown, who because of practice have their faculties exercised for discriminating between both good and evil.

Hymn: 812

OUTLINE

I. In order to study the Bible properly, one has to meet two basic requirements

A. Objective requirement—the "methods" of studying the Bible has to be right.

B. Subjective requirement—the "person" studying the Bible must be right.

II. To be a "right" person before God, there are three prerequisites:

A. The need to be spiritual

1. Only a person who is regenerated, having a regenerated spirit can read the word of God—John 4:24; 6:63.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

2. God has given the spiritual matters to the spiritual man—1 Cor. 2:1-15, 3:1-4.

1 Cor. 2:1 And I, when I came to you, brothers, came not according to excellence

of speech or of wisdom, announcing to you the mystery of God.

1 Cor. 2:2 For I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified.

1 Cor. 2:3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling;

1 Cor. 2:4 And my speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

1 Cor. 2:5 In order that your faith would not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

1 Cor. 2:6 But we do speak wisdom among those who are full-grown, yet a wisdom not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are being brought to nought;

1 Cor. 2:7 But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the wisdom which has been hidden, which God predestined before the ages for our glory,

1 Cor. 2:8 Which none of the rulers of this age have known; for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

1 Cor. 2:9 But as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

1 Cor. 2:10 But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

1 Cor. 2:11 For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God.

1 Cor. 2:12 But we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which have been graciously given to us by God;

1 Cor. 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things with spiritual words.

1 Cor. 2:14 But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually.

1 Cor. 2:15 But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one.

1 Cor. 3:1 And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to fleshy, as to infants in Christ.

1 Cor. 3:2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it. But neither yet now are you able,

1 Cor. 3:3 For you are still fleshly. For if there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly and do you not walk according to the manner of man?

1 Cor. 3:4 For when someone says, I am of Paul, and another, I of Apollos, are you not men of flesh?

a. Soulish man—is an unregenerated man; he does not have a regenerated spirit and does not have the proper organ to understand God's word. Such a person cannot understand the Bible.

b. Fleshy man—such a man has God's life and His Spirit within him. But he walks not according to this spirit but according to the flesh. He has a very limited understanding of the Bible.

c. Spiritual man—such a person has the Spirit of God. He operates under the power of the living Spirit and walks according to the principle of the Spirit. The amount of revelation he receives is unlimited. God's Word says that spiritual things can only be discerned by spiritual men.

B. Consecration

1. The heart being open—2 Cor. 3:18

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

2. The Eye being single—Matt.6:22-24

Matt. 6:22 The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light;

Matt. 6:23 But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be dark. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Matt. 6:24 No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

3. The need for continual obedience—John 7:17

John 7:17 If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.

C. Being experienced in practice—Heb. 5:14

Heb. 5:14 But solid food is for the full-grown, who because of practice have their faculties exercised for discriminating between both good and evil.

1. Not being subjective.

2. Not being careless.

3. **Not being curious.**

REFERENCE

How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE PREPARATION OF THE PERSON

In order to study the Bible properly, one has to meet two basic requirements. The first requirement is that the person must be right; he must pass through proper training. The second requirement is that he has to have the right methods. During the past few centuries, in particular since the rise of Protestantism, many books have been published on the study of the Bible. Many of them are very good, but almost all are short in one matter—they only pay attention to methods of studying the Bible; they do not pay enough attention to the person who is studying the Bible. They give the impression that anyone who uses these methods will achieve good results. Many have tried these methods but have not found any profit to their study. Those who have written books on the study of the Scripture have studied the Scripture well, but those who try to imitate them by approaching the Bible with the same methods do not necessarily fare as well. This is because the imitators have forgotten who they are. The study of the Bible is not only a matter of methods but a matter of the person. Some study the Bible well because they—the persons—have learned the proper lessons from God. When they find the right methods to assist. In their study, they reap rich results. It is wrong to pass on methods without considering the kind of person one has to be. Even when some have the right methods, they can never study the Bible well because they are wrong in their very person.

A person must be right before he can adopt the right method to study the Bible. Methods are important because without good methods, one

cannot study the Bible well. But the person must also be properly calibrated before he can study the Bible well. Some people have a misguided concept that very few people can study the Bible. Others have a mistaken notion that anyone can study the Bible. Both are wrong. It is wrong to think that very few people can study the Bible, and it is equally wrong to think that everyone can study the Bible only one kind of person can study the Bible, and we have to be that kind of person before we can study the Bible well. We have to see that the person is first; the methods second. If the person is wrong, nothing will work even if one has all the right methods. If the person is right, the right methods can be put to good use. Some people pay much attention to good methods. Even though we also pay proper attention to good methods, we should never make methods our first priority. The methods do not come first; the person does. First, we have to be right in our person, and then we can speak about the best methods of Bible study. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1)

TO BE A "RIGHT" PERSON BEFORE GOD, THERE ARE THREE PREREQUISITES

The Need to be Spiritual

Only one who has a regenerated spirit can read the word of God

The Bible is not only a book with words or letters printed on pages of paper. The very nature of the Bible is spirit. For this reason, everyone who reads this book must approach it with his spirit; it must be read with the spirit…. The spirit that we are referring to is the spirit of every regenerated person. We call this spirit the "regenerated spirit". Not everyone has this spirit. Therefore, not everyone can read the Bible well. Only those who have this spirit can read the Bible well; those who do not have this spirit cannot read it well. This spirit is needed to worship God. This same spirit is needed to read the Bible well.

The Lord said," It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing;

the word which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63) Here we see two realms. One is the realm of spirit; the other is the realm of flesh. In the realm of spirit, everything is unprofitable. One must read the Bible with his spirit and in the realm of spirit. No matter how educated, logical, and analytical a man is, he cannot understand the Bible if he does not have this spirit.

God is Spirit. We know God today because we have a spirit….Unbelievers want to find out about God through analysis, synthesis, and reasoning. But even when the analysis, synthesis, and reasoning are all well founded, they will still not believe in God, because God can never be analyzed or synthesized. Job said, "Can you find out the depths of God?" (Job 11:7). No one can find out God by research. There is only one way to find out God—by the regenerated spirit. Those who touch God with this spirit will know Him right away. There is no other way except this way. In order to study the Bible, a man must have a regenerated spirit, in the same way that he must have a regenerated spirit to touch God. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1)

God Gives Spiritual Things to Spiritual Man

As a rule, after a man becomes a Christian, he should know the things of the Spirit. But why is it that so many brothers and sisters do not know them? The reason is that though they have a regenerated spirit, they are not necessarily spiritual men. Paul's emphasis in 1 Corinthians 2and 3 is not merely the spirit but spiritual. John's emphasis is the spirit, but Paul's emphasis is on being spiritual. A man must not only have the spirit but must be spiritual according to this spirit. One must have the spirit; without the spirit one can do nothing. But to have the spirit alone without living under the principle of this spirit, that is without living in this spirit and walking according to this spirit to be a spiritual man, is useless….The fundamental way to the understanding of the Bible is through the spirit. This is the reason Paul showed us in 1 Corinthians 2 that the issue is not having or not having the spirit, but of being spiritual or not being spiritual.

Spiritual things are discerned only by spiritual men. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1)

First Corinthians 2 and 3 show us three kinds of men: First, there is the soulish man. Such a man merely possesses all the faculties of the soul. We can call him the psychological man. A soulish man is an unregenerated man; he does not have a regenerated spirit and does not have the proper organ to understand God's word. Such a person cannot understand the Bible.

Second, there is the fleshy man. Such a man has God's life and His Spirit within him. But he walks not according to this spirit but according to the flesh. He has a regenerated spirit, but he does not use his spirit or subject himself to the rule of his spirit. He has a spirit, but he does not come under the control of the spirit or allow the spirit to take over everything. The Bible calls this kind of person fleshy. He has a very limited understanding of the Bible. He can only take milk, not solid food. Milk is something that is first digested by the mother. It refers to indirect revelations, revelations that do not come to a person directly. A man who drinks milk cannot receive any direct revelation from God. He receives revelation from other spiritual men, who transfer such revelation to him.

Third, there is the spiritual man. Such a person has the Spirit of God. He operates under the power of the living Spirit and walks according to the principle of the Spirit. The amount of revelation he receives is unlimited. God's Word says that spiritual things can only be discerned by spiritual men. In order to study the Bible, we have to remember these basic requirements: We Must be spiritual and we must walk according to the spirit. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1)

Consecration

Previously, we have said that only spiritual men can understand the Bible. Now we have to add one more thing; only consecrated ones can understand the Bible. If a man is not consecrated, be can never read the Bible well. As soon he opens the Bible, he will come across places that he has held back in consecration, and darkness will be with him…. In order to

understand the Bible, we need an absolute consecration. Without consecration, our heart will not go to God. One special characteristic of consecration is that it brings our heart to God May the Lord show us this basic principle. If we want to read the Bible, understand its teachings, and receive its revelations, we have to hear one responsibility before the Lord: We have to consecrate ourselves absolutely to Him. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1)

The Heart Being Open

The Bible is the word of God. It is full of God's light. Yet this light will only enlighten those who are open to Him. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, " But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord. " The basic qualification for being enlightened by the glory of the Lord is to behold Him with unveiled face. God's light will only enlighten those who are open to Him. If a man is not open to God, he will not receive God's light…. Light operates according to a law. It shines on those who are open to it, and the amount of shining depends on the amount of openness. This is a law.

Every child of God has a Bible in his hand, but the amount of light each receives from this book is different. Some are completely ignorant of what the Bible says. Others receive some light from reading it. Still others are full of light when they read it. The reason for the difference is that the persons reading it are different. God's light is the same, but the persons are different. Any lack of sight that we experience, whether great or small, complete or partial, means that we are in darkness. We should never consider it a small thing to find ourselves having difficulty understanding the Bible. If we have difficulty understanding the Bible, it can only mean one thing: We are living in darkness! It is a very serious thing to read God's Word and not understand or receive any light from it.

Next, we should ask what is the meaning of being open to God? Openness comes from unconditional and unreserved consecration. Openness to God is not a temporary attitude; it is a permanent disposition

which a man develops before God. It is not an incidental temperament but a continuous practice. Openness to God can only come from unconditional and unreserved consecration. If a man's consecration to God is perfect and absolute, he will have no reservation toward God and will not be closed in any way. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1)

The Eye Being Single

Many portions of the Bible explicitly speak of light. In Matthew 6:22 the Lord Jesus spoke on the light of the heart, saying, "The lamp of the body is the eye." … Light is in God's word, whereas the lamp relates to us….In order for God's word to shine in us, we must have a lamp within us. This lamp is our eye. In order for our whole body to be full of light, the Lord specified one condition—our eye must be single. What does it mean to have a single eye? Although we have two eyes, there is only one focus; they only see one thing at one time….In order for the eyes to see clearly, they must have only one point of focus; they cannot have two foci….If our eye is not single, we cannot perceive the light.

The Lord said, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or be will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (6:24) Many people do not have light because their eye is not single. The reason their eye is not single is that they are short of consecration before the Lord. What is consecration? It is serving Jehovah alone. A man cannot serve two masters. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1)

The Need for Continual Obedience

God grants us revelation of scriptural teachings according to the measure of obedience we render to Him. The more we obey Him, the more light we will receive. If we continue to obey God, we will continue to see. Without consecration, we cannot see. Without a continual obedience, we cannot continue to see. If our consecration is not thorough, the shining will not be great. Therefore, the fundamental issue is consecration. If a man

does not understand the meaning of consecration, he cannot understand the Bible. A consecrated person must not only have an initial, fundamental consecration, but he must sustain an obedience before the Lord all the time. Only then will be continually seen. The amount of light a man receives depends on the amount of obedience be sustains after has initial consecration. If we are perfect in our obedience we will be perfect in our seeing.

We should pay special attention to the Lord's word in John 7:17: "If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself." If a man resolves to do God's will, he will know. In other words, obedience is the one condition for knowing. A resolution to do God's will is a condition for knowing God's teaching. If a man has no intention to do God's will, yet wants to know God's teaching, he is asking of the impossible. In order to know God's teaching, a man must first resolve to do His will. This resolution relates to one's attitude. God wants us to be obedient first in our attitude. If a man is obedient to God in his attitude, God's teaching will be clear to him. We should not ask what the Bible teaches. Instead, we should ask if we are willing to obey His word. The problem is with our attitude; it has nothing to do with the teaching of the Bible. Whether or not the Bible will be open to us depends on our attitude towards God. We are responsible for our attitude, while God is responsible for His teaching. If our attitude is right, God will reveal Himself to us and open our eyes immediately. If we supplement this with our obedience, our attitude will be right once again and God will grant us further revelation. First there is a right attitude, and then there is revelation. If we respond to the revelation with obedience, we will have more of the right attitude and will receive more revelation. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1)

Being Experienced in Practice

Not Being Subjective

First, every reader of the Bible should learn to be objective. No

subjective person can understand the Bible. A subjective person is not suitable to be a learner. If we speak to an objective person, he will understand after we speak once. But a subjective person will not understand after we speak three times. Many people do not understand what others are saying, not because they are unintelligent, but because they are too subjective. They live entirely in their mind and cannot take in others' words. They are full of thoughts, opinions, and proposals. Others' words cannot find any ground in them. Their mind may be focused on water, while others may be speaking about mountains. They interpret what they hear and take the mountains to mean mountains with water. A subjective person cannot understand men's word accurately, let alone hear God's word! He cannot understand worldly things, let alone spiritual things.

One interesting thing about those who are good at studying the Bible is that they are all quick to listen. Once others say something, they understand exactly what has been spoken. An objective person can listen to others, and he can also understand the Bible. In contrast, some people do not have any idea what others are saying even after listening once or twice. They have too many things in their head. They are full of thoughts, opinions, and proposals. Others can repeat the same thing to them once or twice, but they will still not get it. In order to find out if we are subjective, we only need to ask ourselves if we understand what others are saying. Can we understand what others are saying even if they speak very briefly? Our days on this earth are limited. If we are subjective, the time that is available to us will be greatly reduced. An objective man can get more from reading the Bible one time than a subjective man can from reading it ten times. A subjective man will miss what he reads even after he reads it once, twice, or even nine or ten times. The Bible will slip by him and not leave any impression in him. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1)

Not Being Careless

Second, no one can be careless in reading the Bible. The Bible is a very

accurate book. Not a single word of it can be misread or replaced. If a person is somewhat careless, he will miss God's word. A subjective man will miss God's word, and a careless man will also miss God's word. We have to be careful. The more we know God's word, the more careful we will be. A sloppy person has a sloppy reading of the Bible. As soon as we hear a brother speak on the Bible, we know whether he is a sloppy person or a careful person. In reading or memorizing a verse, many people make careless mistakes with crucial words. This is a terrible habit. It is easy for us to become inaccurate in our habit. This leads to an inaccurate understanding of the Bible. In many instances a little carelessness on our part will lead to misunderstanding God's word.

Before the Lord we have to develop the habit of being accurate. If we are inaccurate, we will sacrifice God's accuracy. If we have a habit of being inaccurate, we will not get anything when we read the Bible. We have to realize how accurate the Bible is. It is so accurate that it has no room for any confusion. We must be trained by the Lord to be accurate. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1)

Not Being Curious

Third, in trying to be accurate, we must not become curious. God's Word is accurate, but we must never search it with a curious mind. If we search God's Word with a curious mind, we will miss the spiritual worth of the book. The Bible is a spiritual book, and we must exercise our spirit before we can understand this book. If the purpose of achieving accuracy is the satisfaction of our curiosity, not the satisfaction of our spiritual needs, we are on the wrong track. It is unfortunate that many people read the Bible with the goal of digging out strange things. Some people have spent a great deal of time trying to ascertain whether or not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a vine tree. This kind of study of the Bible is vain. We must remember that the Bible is a spiritual book. We have to touch life, touch the spirit, and touch the Lord. Once we touch the spiritual things, we will spontaneously recognize the literal accuracy of the Word because all

spiritual things are intrinsically accurate. But if our premise is not a pursuit of spiritual things, we will be on the wrong track. This error comes from one's disposition for curiosity. If we do not change our disposition, we con not expect to read the Bible well. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 1)

QUESTIONS

1. What are the two basic requirements in order to study the Bible properly?

2. What are the three prerequisites in studying the Bible?

3. Why does a person who is regenerated in his spirit still have to be spiritual in order to study the Bible?

4. To a Bible reader, what is the relationship between consecration and the heart being open, the eye being single, and the need for continual obedience?

5. What are the three habits that we need in studying the Bible?

LESSON SIX

FOUR CRUCIAL ELEMENTS OF THE BIBLE— CHRIST, THE SPIRIT, LIFE AND THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading:

Col. 3:4a When Christ our life is manifested…

1 Cor. 15:45b …the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Phil. 1:19-21 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Hymn: 820

OUTLINE

I. The intrinsic, crucial elements of the Bible:

A. The Bible presents the divine and mystical matters in a way that is easily understandable to us. For this reason, the Bible seems to contain some "bark" and "branches."

B. We must go beyond the superficial branches and enter into the depths of the Bible in order to touch its spirit, its kernel, and to know its crucial elements.

C. Man is of three parts—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23)—the most important part is the innermost part, the spirit, which is the breath of life in man (Gen. 2:7). Without such a breath of life, it is not possible for man to exist, and man thus ceases to be man.

1 Thes. 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gen. 2:7 Jehovah God formed man with the dust of the ground and breathed into

his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

D. Likewise, the Bible has its kernel, its life, and its center, which is constituted with Christ, the Spirit, life and the church. These four items are the contents of the true substance of the Bible.

II. The four crucial elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, life and the church:

A. Christ—the emphasis being that Christ is the believers' life and is united and mingled with the believers—Col. 3:4a; John 15:4-5, 1 Cor. 6:17.

Col. 3:4a When Christ our life is manifested…

John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

1 Cor. 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

B. The Spirit—the emphases being that the Holy Spirit of God has been compounded with Christ's divinity, humanity, crucifixion, and resurrection to be the compound, life-giving, indwelling, sanctifying, transforming, and sevenfold intensified Spirit—Exo. 30:23-25; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 8:11; 15:16b; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rev. 4:5.

Exo. 30:23 You also take the finest spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred fifty shekels, and of fragrant calamus two hundred fifty shekels,

Exo. 30:24 And of cassia five hundred shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil.

Exo. 30:25 And you shall make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded according to the perfumer's art; it shall be a holy anointing oil.

1 Cor. 15:45b …The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Rom. 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

Rom. 15:16b In order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Rev. 4:5 And out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders.

And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

C. Life—the emphases being that God in Christ as the Spirit of reality is the believers' life that they may live Him out as the processed Triune God—1 Cor. 1:30; John 14:17; Phil. 1:19-21a.

1 Cor. 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

John 14:17 Even 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.

Phil. 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Phil. 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.

Phil. 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ.

D. The church—the emphasis being that the believers are on the ground of oneness to be the testimony of the Body of Christ—Eph. 1:23; 4:1-6.

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Eph. 4:1 I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,

Eph. 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love,

Eph. 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:

Eph. 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

Eph. 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;

Eph. 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

III. Christ being the center and extract of the Bible:

A. Christ is the Triune God, the experience of Christ is the experience of the Triune God—John 1:1; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Rom. 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and out of whom, as regards what is according to flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

Heb. 1:8 But of the Son, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

B. The Old Testament speaks of Christ with a great part in types and a considerable part in prophecies:

1. The Old Testament speaks about Christ with types in six major categories: human beings, plants, animals, minerals, offerings, and foods.

2. The genealogy of Christ in Matthew chapter one is a miniature of the entire Old Testament.

C. The New Testament speaks of Christ altogether in plain words.

1. Speaking of what Christ is—Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 3:4; Eph. 3:8.

Rom. 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and out of whom, as regards what is according to flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

2 Cor. 2:5 But if anyone has caused sorrow, he has not caused me to sorrow, but in part (lest I lay too heavy a burden) all of you.

2 Cor. 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

1 Cor. 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Col. 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

Eph. 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel.

2. Speaking of how to experience and enjoy Christ—Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Phil. 1:20-21a; 3:8, 10a.

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Gal. 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you.

Phil. 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.

Phil. 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ.

Phil. 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of

whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ.

Phil. 3:10a To know Him and the power of His resurrection.

IV. The Spirit—the essence and sphere of the New Testament.

A. The Christ presented in the New Testament is altogether with the Spirit as the center, element, and sphere.

B. The Lord is the Spirit, the Spirit is the processed and consummated Triune God—1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17.

1 Cor. 15:45b the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

2 Cor. 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

C. The content of the entire New Testament is the Spirit.

V. Life—The life of divinity mingled with humanity is the crucial elements of the New Testament.

A. The Spirit being life—Rom. 8:2.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

B. Our entire person of three parts—spirit, soul, and body—will be life—Rom. 8:6, 10-11.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Rom. 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

Rom. 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

VI. The Church—The end of the extracts of the revelation of the Bible.

A. Christ is the beginning, the church being the end, the process being the Spirit and life.

B. The church is the reality of the kingdom and brings in the kingdom, and the ultimate consummation, that is, the New Jerusalem.

REFERENCE

Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church, Chs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, and 10.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE INTRINSIC, CRUCIAL ELEMENTS OF THE BIBLE

The Bible was written by men under God's inspiration. Compared to God, man is simple; hence, the way that the Bible was written is also simple. In particular, the Bible presents the divine and mystical matters in a way that is easily understandable to us. For this reason, the Bible seems to contain some "bark" and "branches." In their reading of the Bible, many Christians often touch only these superficial things. They do not penetrate the Bible to touch its kernel. They do not touch the spirit and life in the depths of the Bible nor know the real, crucial elements in it. We must go beyond the superficial branches and bark and enter into the depths of the Bible in order to touch its spirit, its kernel, and to know its crucial elements.

A nut consists of a shell, the meat, and the kernel, which is the center. Man is also of three parts: the outer part—the physical organs; the inner part—the soul; and the innermost part—the spirit (1 Thes. 5:23). Of these three parts—spirit, soul, and body—the most important part is the innermost part, the spirit, which is the breath of life in man (Gen. 2:7). Without such a breath of life, it is not possible for man to exist, and man thus ceases to be man. Likewise, the Bible has its kernel, its life, its center, which is constituted with the church, Christ, the Spirit, and life. These four items are the contents of the true substance of the Bible.

The revelation of the Bible, particularly the New Testament, stresses these four matters: the church, Chris, the Spirit and life. If we remove these four items from the New Testament, all that remains would merely be dead letters. These four crucial elements are also the four important items in the Lord's recovery today. Hence, we must all have a deep impression, a fresh light, and a renewed understanding concerning these four crucial elements. (The Four Crucial Elements of the Bible Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the

Church, p.8)

FOUR CRUCIAL ELEMENTS OF THE BIBLE— CHRIST, THE SPIRIT, LIFE, AND THE CHURCH

I have been saved for sixty years (until 1984), and in these sixty years there has not been one day that I did not read the Bible. I also have been writing expositions of biblical truths for over fifty years. After this year, I will have finished writing the notes on the entire New Testament. I can say that not only do I have a general view of the Bible, but I have also studied the Bible in a penetrating and thorough way. In these many years I have spoken a great deal on the crucial subjects in the Bible. I have been constantly considering what this comprehensive Bible talks about and what its essence or extract is. When I first went to Taiwan, I studied the Bible with the brothers and sisters every day. In one year we studied sixty topics, which are the sixty topics in The Fundamental Truths in the Bible. However, after studying that many topics, eventually I have to admit that the extracts of the Bible are nothing other than these four items: Christ, the Spirit, life, and the church. In the beginning is Christ, at the end is the church, and in the process are the Spirit and life.

These four items—Christ, the Spirit, life, and the church—constitute the biblical science as well as biblical philosophy, astronomy, geography, ethics, history, and theology. Everything spoken of in the Bible is for these four items. Only Christ is the reality; He is the body of all things (Col. 2:17). If there is no Christ, there is no Spirit, and neither are there life and the church. If there is Christ, there is reality and substance. Christ is the Spirit, the Spirit is life, and life produces the church. Without Christ, there is no Spirit; without the Spirit, there is no life; and without life, there is no way to produce the church. Hence, these four items are the extract, the cream, the essence, of the Bible. (pp. 36-37)

CHRIST BEING THE CENTER EXTRACT OF THE BIBLE

Christ Being the Triune God, the Experience of Christ

being the Experience of the Triune God

The Triune God is intimately related to our experience of Christ. Actually, in our proper experience, this Christ is the Triune God. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." According to flesh, Christ came out of Israel, out of the tribe of Judah, yet Romans 9:5 says that He "is God over all, blessed forever." He is man, and He is also God. He is God the Son, and He is also the Triune God blessed forever…. Hebrews 1:8 says, "But of the Son, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever…." This proves that the Son is God, even the God who sits on the throne….When we experience the Son, we experience the Triune God. (pp. 24-25)

This Christ who is full of attractiveness and rich in magnetism is the essence of the Bible. The Bible covers thousands of items and deals with a great number of doctrines, but it has only one center—Christ Himself. …We must realize that the Bible also has its life, its essence. The life, the essence, of the Bible is Jesus Christ.

The Types in the Old Testament

The Bible consists of two sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament speaks of Christ with a great part in types and a considerable part in prophecies but nearly with no plain words. This may be compared to the teaching material in kindergartens that consists of very few plain words but many pictures. The teaching material in graduate schools, however, contains very few pictures; instead, it contains many classical writings. Although the Old Testament, like the teaching material in kindergartens, consists mostly of pictures with very few plain words, it is not simple to understand the meaning of the pictures. Therefore, concerning the types in the Old Testament, we need to understand their significance.

There are six major categories of types in the Old Testament. The first category is human beings; the second, animals; the third, plants; the fourth, minerals; the fifth, offerings; and the sixth, foods. All these six major

categories contain types of Christ. (p. 52.)

The Plain Words in the New Testament

Each of the twelve verses listed above in the Scripture reading (outline point IIIC) contains an extract. These twelve verses may be divided into two sections. The first six verses tell us what Christ is. Romans 9:5 says that Christ is God, who is above all and blessed forever. First Timothy 2:5 says that Christ is man, while 2 Corinthians 3:17 says that Christ is the Spirit. First Corinthians 1:30 tells us that Christ is wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Colossians 3:4 says that Christ is our life, and Ephesians 3:8 says that Christ is One who is unsearchably rich. The latter six verses give us the way to experience and enjoy Christ. Galatians 2:20 says that Christ lives in us, and 4:19 says that Christ is being formed in us. In Philippians 1:20 Christ will be magnified, as always, in our body, and in verse 21a for us to live is Christ. Philippians 3:8 speaks of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and verse 10a refers to knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection. These are all very sweet experiences. (p. 35)

THE SPIRIT—
THE ESSENCE AND SPHERE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Christ Presented in the New Testament Being altogether with the Spirit as the Center, Element, and Sphere

The Old Testament speaks of Christ by way of allegories and types. Although this makes it easy for people to comprehend, they still cannot easily have a full understanding. A picture is always better than a thousand words. When we look at the pictures in the Old Testament, we can right away understand their apparent, superficial, and literal side. However, unless the Lord opens the understanding of our mind, we really cannot understand the intrinsic, deep, and essential significance contained in them. As we have seen, the Old Testament speaks about Christ with types in six major categories: human beings, animals, plants, minerals, offerings, and

foods. The New Testament continues by speaking of Christ altogether in plain words. In speaking about Christ, the New Testament does not mainly use types, such as human beings, animals, plants, minerals, offerings, and foods. Instead, it speaks of Christ as the Spirit. In the New Testament, Christ is presented altogether with the Spirit as the center, the element, and the sphere.

Hence, the Spirit is the essence, the factor, of the New Testament. The New Testament opens with a revelation showing us that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit even when he was in his mother's womb, and then his mother and father were also filled with the Holy Spirit. Then it goes on to show that Jesus was altogether conceived and born through the Holy Spirit's entering into humanity. He was One who had humanity with divinity and who lived on the earth for thirty-three and a half years, died on the cross, and resurrected, through which He brought humanity into divinity. In resurrection He became such a wonderful One, One who is divinity in humanity and humanity in divinity. (pp. 61-62)

The Lord Being the Spirit

First Corinthians 15:45b says, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." The last Adam is the One who brought divinity into humanity. Then through death and resurrection He brought humanity into divinity, and He became the life-giving Spirit. …When the Son came, the Father came with Him (John 8:16, 29; 16:32). Moreover, the conception of the Son was of the Holy Spirit; He was begotten by divinity entering into humanity. When the Son came out for His ministry, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him as His power. Then, through His death and resurrection He brought humanity into divinity. He is such a mysterious and marvelous One. After passing through these mysterious and marvelous processes, He became the life-giving Spirit. The apostle Paul saw such a revelation clearly and boldly declared, "The Lord is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17). This means that Christ in resurrection is not only the life-giving Spirit but also "the Spirit."…Hence, the entire Bible consummates with the Spirit, who is the ultimate

consummation of the Triune God. The Triune God came through incarnation and passed through death and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit as the ultimate consummation of the Triune God. …These four passages of the New Testament (Eph. 2:18; 3:16-17; 4:4-6; 2 Cor. 3:14) clearly reveal the Triune God, and all prove to us that both the experience of Christ and the experience of the Holy Spirit are in reality the experience of the Triune God. (p. 100)

The Content of the Entire New Testament Being the Spirit

The sequence of the four Gospels is wonderful. At the beginning Matthew says that Mary conceived through the Holy Spirit and brought forth a God-man; at the end John says that this God-man became the Spirit and was breathed into His disciples. At the conclusion of the Gospels, the God-man Jesus, who brought divinity into humanity through incarnation and who also brought humanity into divinity through death and resurrection, became the Spirit. As such, He breathed Himself into His disciples as their life and everything and sent them with His commission, qualifying them to represent Him with His authority for the carrying out of His commission (John 20:22-23; Matt. 28:18-20).

After the four Gospels, there is the book of Acts. Acts is altogether a story of the Spirit. Many Bible readers recognize that the Acts of the apostles is the Acts of the Spirit and the biography of the Spirit…. After the book of Acts, there are the Epistles….The fourteen Epistles of Paul all speak at some length concerning this Spirit. In Revelation, the last book of the Bible, …it speaks of "the Spirit." …In the beginning of Revelation it was the Spirit speaking to the churches; then it was the Spirit speaking in the church, the believers; and at the end it is the Spirit and the bride, the church, speaking together as one. This indicates that the church's experience of the Spirit has advanced to such an extent that she has become one with the Spirit. Hence, the entire Bible consummates with the Spirit.(pp. 64-65)

LIFE-THE LIFE OF DIVINITY MINGLED WITH HUMANITY BEING THE ESSENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Spirit being Life

Romans 8:2 reveals that the Spirit is the Spirit of life and that this Spirit of life has a law. This indicates that the Spirit Himself is life because a life is a law. Since the Spirit has become one with life and contains the element of life, He of course is life. Therefore, the Spirit of life is life. (p. 122)

The Entire Person—Spirit, Soul, and Body—Being Life

Christ is the Spirit, and the Spirit is life. When we were saved, this life entered into our spirit, making our spirit life. This is why Romans 8:10 says, "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness." However, we still have the psuche life, the soul-life, within us. Our mind, emotion, and will still remain in the realm of the psuche. Therefore, we must continue pursuing to give the Lord the room within us by setting our mind, emotion, and will upon Him.

The more we love the Lord and pursue Him, the more room He will have within us. His life will not only fill our spirit but also overflow into our soul to saturate our mind. This is to set our mind on the spirit, and the result is that our mind is life, which issues in peace. This is why Romans 8:6 says, "The mind set on the spirit is life and peace." When the mind becomes life, the soul becomes life.

If we pursue and exercise further, life will grow a little more. The result will be that the Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead, who dwells in us, will be able to give life to our mortal bodies, as spoken of in Romans 8:11. In this way our entire person of three parts will be life; our spirit is life, our mind, the leading part of the soul, will be life, and our mortal body will also have life. This means that our entire being will be life. (pp. 129-130)

THE CHURCH—THE END OF THE EXTRACTS OF THE REVELATION OF THE BIBLE

Christ is complete and perfect, and He has passed through all His

processes to become the life-giving Spirit—the Spirit, who is life. Christ, the Spirit, and life produce the church. Our publication entitled The Basic Revelation in the Holy Scriptures covers seven main points concerning God's plan, the Son's redemption, the Spirit's application, the producing of the believers, the believers becoming the church, the church being the reality of the kingdom and bringing in the kingdom, and the ultimate consummation being the New Jerusalem. The extracts revealed in the Holy Scriptures are Christ, the Spirit, and life. However, the scriptural revelation does not end with these three items; it ends with the church, that is, with the New Jerusalem as the consummation of the church.

Therefore, we have a very clear picture. Our vision has been not only enlarged and advanced but also strengthened and brightened. The two ends of the Bible are Christ and the church, and the process in between is the Spirit and life. During the period from the Lord Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement to His second coming, the whole universe is altogether a matter of the Spirit and life to us. Our salvation, our growth, our transformation, and our maturity in Christ are all matters of the Spirit and life. Therefore, the Bible is not a book merely about human history, the creation of the heavens and the earth, or much less morality and ethics. The Bible is a book concerning Christ, the Spirit with the human spirit, life, and the church. Christ is the initiation, the church is the consummation, and the process is the Spirit and life. (p. 153)

QUESTIONS

1. Based on the Scriptures, please briefly explain the four crucial elements of the Bible.

2. Why is Christ the center and extracts of the Bible?

3. What are the essence and the sphere of the New Testament?

4. What is the element of the New Testament?

5. Why is the church the consummation of the extracts of the revelation of the Bible?

LESSON SEVEN

THE LIFE-STUDY OF THE BIBLE (1)

Hymn: 801

OUTLINE

I. The function of the Life-study messages:

A. Ministering the life supply.

B. Presenting the truth.

C. Solving the common and hard problems in the Bible.

D. Opening up the books of the Bible.

II. The characteristics of the Life-study messages:

A. Acquiring the crucial points of the truth and a bird's-eye view of the Scriptures.

B. Realizing and experiencing every aspect of the Christ.

C. Applying to our daily life by the real experience.

III. Getting into the truth of the Bible through the Life-study messages:

A. Bringing people to touch the life.

B. Encouraging people to progress in the truth.

C. Enlightening people to speak the deep truths.

D. Increasing the riches in the meeting.

IV. How to study and use the Life-study messages:

A. The Life-study messages are not to replace the Bible and also not for educational research but they are the best way to bring people into the Bible.

B. The Life-study of both the Old Testament and New Testament started with the Life-Study of Romans back in 1974 and finished with the life-study of Song of Songs in 1995. There are 867

Life-study messages in the Old Testament, and 1,117 messages in the New Testament. Therefore, there is a total of 1,984 messages. The Life-Study of the Bible took Brother Lee the longest time to publish. Its content is also the broadest and deepest. It is the most complete publication work in the Lord's recovery.

If a saint would read 2 messages a day, he would finish all the Life-study messages in 2 years and 8 months.

C. The best way to study is to find out the truth and realize the crucial points.

D. You must have a bird's-eye view.

E. Dig into the Recovery Version with footnotes and the Life-study messages as a mine to dig out the treasure.

REFERENCE

Elders' Training, Book 3, Chs. 1, 9, 10, 12; Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel—the Four Great Pillars in the Lord's Recovery, Ch. 1.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE FUNCTION OF THE LIFE-STUDY MESSAGES

I have made an attempt to open every book of the New Testament to you, but I have left the further digging to you. I have only "opened up the mine," and I have not dug that much. The foundation which Brother Watchman Nee laid in China helped me greatly. During his time, however, he told me that he Lord had not permitted him to write any expositions. Through the messages I heard personally and directly from him, through the publications put out by him, and through many direct talks with him for over at least eighteen years, I received a very solid foundational word to build on. As a result, I picked up the burden to write the expository notes for the Recovery Version to open each book of the New Testament to the seeking saints. Both Brother Nee and I did not have that much time to dig further. I want to dig further and I am still digging, but I do not believe that

I can do that much. Therefore, I leave this further digging matter to you.

The basic truths have been presented to us, and much life nourishment has been put into print, especially with the Life-study Messages. Also, the obstacles have nearly all been removed. We3 now have a clear way for our study, and every book is open to us. In mining, the hardest thing is to open the mine. Once the mine has been opened and the treasure is exposed, it is easy for someone to dig out the treasure. I have left only this one matter of further digging to you. I believe the Lord will continue this digging work either through you or through some others. After a period of time I believe that many of you will be "good diggers." The intention and the goal of our publishing of the Life-study Messages is to open up the mine for you to go in and dig. (Elders' Training, Book 3, pp. 92-93)

THE FEATURES OF THE LIFE-STUDIES

Pointing Out the Central Theme and All of Its Aspects

The Bible is a special work of literature. Although it does not focus on any particular topic, it has a central theme that is comprehensive, encompassing many matters. Over the ages, the greatest difficulty for Bible readers has been the difficulty of seeing the Bible's central light and the comprehensiveness of its light. Thus, their understanding of the Bible has been fragmented and peripheral. They may have understood a point here and a point there, but they have not been able to gain a complete understanding. If we want to have a complete understanding of the Bible, we must see that the Bible has only one center and that this center encompasses many matters; it is comprehensive.

Under this principle the life-studies have a center. They also contain explanations and definitions of various matters, so they are comprehensive as well. Therefore, when we study the life-studies we are always able to obtain the life nourishment from them, and we are also able to gain some knowledge of the truth. However, because they are comprehensive and are not focused on one specific topic, it is difficult for people to see the center. This is why when we study the life-studies with people we must point out

the central theme and present the main points to them.

Let us take the Life-study of Exodus as an example. All Bible students know that Exodus speaks of Christ and that Christ is the center of Exodus. However, to know this in such a simple way is insufficient. First we must point out which aspects of Christ are spoken of in Exodus. Then we should point out how Exodus presents all these aspects of Christ. Some people say that Exodus speaks about matters such as the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. This kind of answer is very general and does not reveal to us in a practical way the reality we see and enjoy in Exodus. For example, someone may ask you what you had for dinner, and you may answer in a definite way that you ate fish, shrimp, meat, tofu, and fruit. In the same way, we must be able to point out how Exodus speaks about the death of Christ and His resurrection. Only by doing this will we be able to show forth all the aspects of Christ.

The central theme of Exodus is how Christ becomes everything to us. First, He became our Passover Lamb. The blood of the Passover lamb typifies the precious blood of Christ shed for the forgiveness of our sins (Matt. 26:28; John 19:34; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). There is also the meat which typifies the generating life of Christ as our supply (John 6:53, 55). Then there is the unleavened bread that typifies Christ Jesus who is our nourishment of life and who takes away all our sinful and evil things (1 Cor. 5:7-8). Finally there are the bitter herbs that indicate that we need to regret and repent, to experience bitterness in the matter of sinful things. (Truth, life, the church, the gospel—the four great pillars in the Lord's recovery, pp. 1-3 in Chinese)

Apprehending and Experiencing All the Aspects of Christ

Exodus does not use any clear terms referring to Christ's death. However, with the help of the life-study messages we can clearly see that although Exodus does not use the word death to talk about Christ's death, it does use the killing of the Passover lamb to describe Christ's death. In addition, the Passover lamb, while it does not directly show the

resurrection of Christ, actually implies the reality of Christ's resurrection. The meat of the lamb eventually entered into its eaters to be their life supply. This implies the process of resurrection. Christ can be received into us to supply us inwardly and to live in us; this implies that He has gone through the process of death and resurrection. Therefore, the precious blood refers to the aspect of Christ's death, while the meat of the lamb entering into the Israelites refers to the aspect of resurrection. The blood was spread on the doorposts and on the lintel, signifying the crucified Christ as our covering. The meat was eaten to get into the people, signifying the resurrected Christ entering into us as our spiritual supply. This is our experience of the crucified and resurrected Christ. (p. 6 in Chinese)

Checking These Types with Our Practical Experience and Applying Them to Our Daily Living

If we only read about the types and study the doctrines without comparing them to our own experiences, it will not be easy to understand Exodus. However, if we compare our experiences to these types, they are very easy to understand because they are descriptions of our normal Christian living. For example, when we Christians get up early in the morning to read the Bible and pray, this is our eating the manna. However, the manna cannot be eaten carelessly. The picture in the Old Testament shows us that there are definite rules for gathering the manna. First, the manna had to be gathered every morning (Exo. 16:21). Some people might have been lazy and reluctant to rise early in the morning, so they did not gather the manna and were hungry all day. Second, the manna could not be kept until the next day (v. 20). Some people were greedy and gathered large piles of manna which they were unable to finish eating, and the next day the manna bred worms and stank. According to our experience, the matter of gathering the manna indicates first of all that we must spend time every morning to read the Lord's Word and to draw near to Him, or else we will not be able to obtain each day's supply of life. Second, it

indicates that the supply of life is for our enjoyment for one day only and cannot be kept over to the next day.

Through the principle of gathering the manna we see God's balancing hand. Even though God did not allow the people to gather a double portion of manna each day, He gave them two days' worth of manna on the sixth day of the week in order to enable them to keep the Sabbath on the seventh day. That extra portion did not breed worms but provided them with fresh enjoyment. This indicates that the enjoyment of Christ is not according to our method or calculation; rather, it is according to God's ordination and arrangement. (p. 5 in Chinese)

ENTERING INTO THE TRUTHS OF THE BIBLE THROUGH THE LIFE-STUDY MESSAGES

Some criticize us, saying that we read the life-study messages and not the Bible. Those who speak this way are completely misinformed. The goal of the life-study messages is to bring people into the truths of the Bible. In the past when people read the Bible they could not find the way to enter in, so they had no way to understand it. This is like having a house with no entryway, no door, and no windows to allow people to enter in. The life-study messages do the work of paving a way, building a door, and opening a window so that people can enter the house and enjoy everything inside. (p. 7 in Chinese)

Leading People To Touch Life

Another function of the life-study messages is to bring people into life. The life-study messages are not a set of philosophical or classical writings apart from the Bible. The life-study messages do not merely expound the Bible and present the truth. Rather, they also bring people into the truth to enjoy and experience its riches. Mere exposition of the Bible is just the impartation of knowledge which causes people to know doctrines mentally. The life-study messages bring us into the depths of the Bible to touch and enjoy the life within (cf. John 5:39 40). (pp. 7-8 in Chinese)

Encouraging people to progress in the truth

There are, however, many deep truths in the Bible. The fourteen epistles of Paul alone have many deep and high truths. For example, Ephesians 1:10 says, "Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him." It is very hard to understand this kind of word, but over the past twenty to thirty years the Lord has revealed to us these deep, high truths in the Bible. Our knowledge of the truth has not only been constantly progressing, but the younger we are, the more room there is for progress…. In the Lord's recovery should have a change in our concepts about the truth. We must not remain stuck in our old ways. (pp. 11-12 in Chinese)

Inspiring People To Speak The Profound Truth

Items such as God's economy, God's dispensing, the essential Spirit, and the economical Spirit are certainly very deep terms, but to the new believers, especially the young ones, they will not seem deep for very long. These new ones will gradually become familiar with the terms, and then they will clearly understand them. We must be willing to change our concepts and must encourage the young ones to learn the highest and deepest truths. I believe that if we do so, in the future when the saints speak to each other and even when they preach the gospel, their speaking will be of the very highest quality. We will not need to charge them to preach the high gospel instead of the gospel of prosperity and peace. As soon as they open their mouths, the high truths will spontaneously come out. Today we may feel that this is not so easy, but very soon they will be using the terms the essential Spirit and the economical Spirit when they preach the gospel to others. They just need to be able to simply say, "Friend, we all are sinners; we all need the essential Spirit to get into us and regenerate us, giving us an inward change in our element. Moreover, God will also give us the economical Spirit so that we may be full of power in our living and actions." Do not think that people will not understand this word. Actually, it is we are the ones who do not understand it, so we think

others will be just like us. (p. 12 in Chinese)

The Lord's recovery has the highest truths. Thus, if we learn the techniques, when we preach the gospel to people, we will be able to appropriately use the highest truths in the Lord's recovery and say, "Friend, we are all sinners without God inside us. We do not have the nature of God, but as soon as we repent of our sins and turn to Him, God's essential Spirit enters into us, causing us to be regenerated and have God's life and nature. This is God's entering into us as our essence. Even more than this, after we are regenerated, if we are willing to deal with our sins and apply the Lord's blood for a thorough washing, then God's economical Spirit will be poured out upon us, making us full of power." I believe that anyone who hears such a word will be able to understand it. When new believers enter into the church life, if they are taught in this way, they will be able to quickly understand the proper meaning of each spiritual term, and they will be able to apply each one practically in their daily lives. (p. 13 in Chinese)

Enriching The Meetings

Today pastors and preachers in Christianity must search everywhere to find a good word for their sermons. Some pastors do not have anything to talk about, so they speak about things such as sanitary practices and personal hygiene. Some are a little better and speak about matters such as redemption, the washing away of sins, and justification. There are some who are even deeper and speak about things such as how to fellowship with the Lord and how to enjoy the peace given to us by the Lord. But even this is not really enough when we speak of the richness of the meetings. We have seen from our experience and our research that the richest meetings are those with the life-study messages as their content. If every Lord's Day we would take two life-study messages as the content of our fellowship, the meeting would be very rich.

We should bring all the saints in the churches in the Lord's recovery into the practice of carefully reading one or two life-study messages each week. If we do this, over the long term—perhaps over ten, eight, or even just five

years—the saints will make much progress in all areas, and the condition of the entire church will also be reversed.

It is not an easy task to be built up in the truth. You must study the text and every note. If possible, it is helpful to take care of the cross-references. Then you need to study the Life-study messages. You need to get into these messages not like you are reading a newspaper or a reference book. You must consider the text of the Recovery Version with the notes and the Life-study messages as a textbook. Because this is my work, I know the nature of it. I am fellowshipping this with you to let you know the way our publications were written. If you merely read them in a light way, you cannot get into them. You must study them as a textbook.

If you merely read the Life-studies, you will only receive a temporary nourishment. That will only become a kind of inspiration to you. An inspiration is like a vapor in the air. When what we read becomes a truth in our being, this nourishment remains forever. What I have received is not all the time inspiration, like a vapor. What I have received from the Lord is always the solid truth, so it remains in me, nourishing me all the time. You must have the truth. The only way for the truth to get into you is through your mentality. Then it remains in your memory. If you do not understand, the truth cannot get into you. The truth gets into you through your mentality, your understanding. Also, if the truth gets into your memory, it becomes a constant and long term nourishment. Then you have an accumulation of the truth, and you are a person continually under the constant nourishment. You will then know how to present the truth to others, not merely to inspire them or to stir them up, but to make them solid and constituted with the truth. (Elders' Training, Book Three, Ch. 9)

QUESTIONS

1. Please explain the functions of the Life-study messages.
2. Please introduce the characteristics of the Life-study messages.

3. How many Life-study messages are there in the Old and the New Testaments respectively? What is the total number?

4. How to study and use the Life-study messages?

LESSON EIGHT

THE LIFE-STUDY OF THE BIBLE (2)

Hymn: 841

OUTLINE

I. The overview of the Life-study concerning the Old Testament and New Testament:

A. The Bible is God's speaking divided into two parts: the first part, the Old Testament, is God speaking through the prophets; the second part, the New Testament, is God speaking in the Son (in the person of the Son)—Heb. 1:1-2.

Heb. 1:1 God, having spoken of old in many portions and in many ways to the fathers in the prophets,

Heb. 1:2 Has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom also He made the universe.

B. The Old Testament portrays Christ as the Coming One; the New Testament is the coming of the One prophesied.

C. Hence, the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. The New Testament and the Old Testament in reality are one, revealing Christ as the One who is our life. (Life-study of Matthew, p.1)

II. The crucial overview of the Life-study concerning the Old Testament:

A. The five books of Moses (Pentateuch): In the progress of the divine revelation there is the advancement of the divine revelation. In Genesis we see God's creation and man's fall. In Exodus we see God came in to save us with His wonderful redemption after man's fall. In Leviticus we have the redeemed's worship and living. In Numbers we see God's redeemed people being formed into His army and their journey in fighting for God. Deuteronomy being the repeat speaking of the divine law is not only the conclusion of the

Pentateuch but also the conclusion of the law. (Life-study of Numbers, pp. 1-2; Life-study of Deuteronomy, pp. 3)

B. The books of history: The intrinsic revelation of the history according to the record from Joshua to Esther is to unveil to us how the eternal economy of God was carried out by His elect on the earth. First, the book of Joshua shows us how to gain, to take possession of, and to keep the good land. Then the books of Judges, Ruth, and 1 and 2 Samuel give us pictures of certain persons, showing us how they remained in the good land and enjoyed the good land after they took possession of it. The record of quite a few judges in the book of Judges, of Ruth and Boaz in the book of Ruth, and of Eli, Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, and David in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel presents us vivid pictures of how those persons remained in and enjoyed the good land. Even though those pictures were painted in detail, there is still the need of 1 and 2 Kings to give us pictures of more persons showing us how they remained in and enjoyed the good land. (Life-study of Kings, pp. 2-3; Life-Study of Joshua, pp. 2) The book of Ezra is concerned with the return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, and the book of Nehemiah is concerned with the repair, the rebuilding, of the city. The book of Esther shows us how the omnipresent and omnipotent God became the hiding God in protecting His captured elect, who were scattered in their captivity. (Life-study of Ezra, p. 3)

C. The books of poetry: Job stresses that God wants man to seek and gain God solely without any other blessings and prosperity, and that God wants man to seek Him for his perfection and not for his integrity. Psalms stresses man's seeking and contacting of God through his praises, prayers, and singing with exultation. Proverbs stresses wisdom that man receives of God through his contacting of God and that teaches man how to behave in his human life. Ecclesiastes stresses the vanity of vanities of all the things under the sun, which is realized by man through the wisdom received from God. Song of Songs stresses that Christ is the song of songs, the satisfaction of satisfactions to human life. (Life-study of Proverbs, pp. 3-4)

D. The books of the prophets (Major and Minor prophets): In the Bible, the emphasis on prophets is mainly to speak for God, and

speak forth God. The content of Isaiah is this: God's dealing in love with His beloved Israel and His righteous judgment upon the nations bring in Christ, the Savior. (Life-study of Isaiah, p. 3) The subject of the book of Jeremiah is Christ being made the righteousness of Jehovah to God's elect as their center and circumference in God's dealings with Israel and the nations. (Life-study of Jeremiah, p. 4) Both Ezekiel and Revelation speak of God being life to man, of the Spirit of life, of the flow of the water of life, and of God's people who have His glorious likeness, becoming His dwelling place. Both books end with a vision of Jerusalem. (Life-study of Ezekiel, p. 1) The central thought of Daniel is that the ruling of the heavens (4:26) by the God of the heavens (2:37, 44) over all the human government on earth matches God's eternal economy for Christ to terminate the old creation for the germination of the new creation and to smash and crush the aggregate of human government and establish the eternal kingdom of God. (Life-study of Daniel, p. 4) The Minor Prophets emphasize on four major points: God's loving chastisement and governmental dealing with Israel, His judgment with the nations, the manifestation of Christ, and the restoration of all things. (Life-study of Hosea, p. 10) The Minor Prophets are minor, but the revelation they bring in is major. The central point of the divine revelation in the Minor Prophets is the same as that in the Major Prophets. (Life-study of Hosea, p. 9)

III. The crucial overview of the Life-study concerning the New Testament:

A. The Gospels and The Acts: The New Testament at its beginning presents four biographies to portray the four main aspects of this all-inclusive Christ. The Gospel of Matthew testifies that He is the King who brings the kingdom of the heavens to the earth. The Gospel of Mark tells us that He is the Servant of God, laboring for God faithfully. The Gospel of Luke presents a full picture of Him as the only proper and normal man who ever lived on this earth. The Gospel of John unveils Him as the Son of God, the very God Himself, who is life to God's people. (New Testament Recovery Version, note 1 of Matt. 1:1, pp. 5-6) The Acts of the Apostles reveals the propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension, by the

Spirit, through the disciples, for the producing of the Churches—The Kingdom of God. (The subject of the book of Acts, p. 474)

B. The Epistles of Paul: In Romans is the Christ who is our righteousness for justification and our life. In 1 and 2 Corinthians is the Christ who is everything in the practical church life. (New Testament Recovery Version, The Subject of the Book of Romans, p. 601). In First and Second Corinthians, Christ is everything in the practical church life. The books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians form a cluster of Epistles that make up the heart of the divine revelation in the New Testament. The essential subject of these four books is Christ and the church. Galatians reveals that Christ is versus religion with its law; Ephesians reveals the church as the Body of Christ; Philippians concerns the experience, the living out, of Christ; and Colossians unveils the all-inclusive and all-extensive Christ as the Head of the Body. (New Testament Recovery Version, note 1 of Galatians 1:1, p. 813) First and Second Thessalonians reveal the genuine Christian life for the proper church life. It is a life of three dimensions in the light of the Lord's coming back—serve the living God, living a sanctified life, and awaiting the Lord's coming back. The first Epistle is for encouragement and comfort; the second is for correction and balance. (New Testament Recovery Version, note 2 of 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 942) First Timothy unveils to us God's economy concerning the church. Second Timothy inoculates us against the decline of the church. Titus is concerned with maintaining the order of the church. The book of Philemon is an illustration of the believers' equal status in the New Man. If we put this Epistle together with 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, we shall know how to have a proper local church life, protecting the church as the proper expression of the Triune God. (Life-study of First Timothy, pp. 2-4; New Testament Recovery Version, note 1 of 1 Timothy 1:1, pp. 968-969) The book of Hebrews reveals Christ being superior to Judaism and everything related to it, and the new covenant which He consummated being better than the old covenant. (The subject of The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 1030)

C. The Epistle of James: The subject of the Epistle of James is

practical Christian perfection. The many virtues he covers in this book are related to this perfection. (Life-study of James, p. 6)

D. The Epistles of Peter and Jude: In the Epistles of Peter, the subject of 1 Peter is the Christian life under the government of God. The subject of 2 Peter is the divine provision and the divine government. In his two Epistles, Peter is on the subject of God's universal government. God governs by judging. This is the way God carries out His government. (Life-study of Peter, pp. 9, 11) The subject of Jude is contending for the faith. (Life-study of Jude, p. 1) The basic structure of 1 and 2 Peter and Jude is the Triune God operating to accomplish a threefold salvation so that we may be regenerated, that we may feed on His word, and that we may grow, be transformed, and be built up in order that He may have a dwelling place and that we may express Him. (Life-study of Jude, pp. 40-41)

E. Epistle of John: John's ministry was not only to mend the ministry of Paul that had been broken, but also to consummate the entire divine revelation of both the Old Testament and New Testament, of both the Gospels and the Epistles. In such a ministry, the focus is the mysteries of the divine life. In his Gospel, as the consummation of the Gospels, the mysteries of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ are unveiled. In his Epistles (especially the first), as the consummation of the Epistles, the mystery of the fellowship of the divine life, which is the fellowship of God's children with God the Father and with one another, is unfolded. Then in his Revelation, as the consummation of the New Testament and the Old Testament, the mystery of Christ being the life supply to God's children for His expression, and the center of the universal administration of the Triune God is revealed. (Note 1 of 1 John 1:1, pp. 1171-1172; Life-study of First John, p.22)

QUESTIONS

1. Please explain briefly the overview of the Old and the New Testaments given by the Life-study.

2. Please explain the crucial overview of the Bible given by the Life-study of the Old Testament.

3. Please explain the crucial overview of the Bible given by the Life-study of the New Testament.

LESSON NINE

THE HIGH PEAK OF THE DIVINE REVELATION (1)

THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF GOD'S ECONOMY

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Rom. 8:29-30 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers; and those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Rev. 21:9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

Rev. 21:10-11 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

Hymn: God's Eternal Economy—Ultimate Manifestation

OUTLINE

I. After so many years, I have been made by God to know only one thing—God became man so that man may become God in life an in nature but not in the Godhead. This is my unique burden, my unique message. (The Practical Way to Live a Life according to the High Peak of the Divine Revelation in the Holy Scriptures, p. 27)

II. God's eternal economy, is to make man the same as He is in life and nature, but not in the Godhead and to make Himself one with man, and man one with Him, thus to be enlarged and expanded in His expression, that all His divine attributes may be expressed in human virtues—1 Tim. 1:3-4; Eph. 3:9; 1:10.

1 Tim. 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in

Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

1 Tim. 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.

Eph. 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.

A. God's pleasure is to be one with man, that man may be the same as He is in life and nature, but not in the Godhead—Eph. 1:5, 9.

Eph. 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself.

B. God created man in a special way—He created man according to His image and likeness. He also created man with a spirit, so that man may contact Him and receive Him—Gen. 1:26, 2:7; Zech. 12:1.

Gen. 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Gen. 2:7 Jehovah God formed man with the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

Zech. 12:1 Thus declares Jehovah, who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him.

C. God became man for the mass reproduction of Himself, thus, to produce a new species—the God-man species—John 1:1, 14; 12:24.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

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.

III. Although we are common, typical sinners, through the six steps of regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification, we are being made God:

A. We have already been regenerated and born of God to become God-men of God's species—John 1:12-13; 3:5-6.

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name,

John 1:13 Who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

B. The Spirit of God is dispensing God's holy nature into every part of our being, saturating every part of our being with God's nature of holiness—Rom. 6:19, 22; 15:16; 1 Thes. 5:23.

Rom. 6:19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification.

Rom. 6:22 But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life.

Rom. 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

1 Thes. 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. The Spirit of God infuses God's divine attributes that are ever-new and ever-fresh into every part of our being to renew us—Titus 3:5b; Rom. 12:2a.

Titus 3:5b …through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind…

D. We are being transformed metabolically by the life element of the Firstborn Son of God in a gradual way until we are transformed into His glorious image—2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

E. To be conformed to the image of the Firstborn Son of God is to be saved in Christ's life and to be delivered from the likeness of the self, that is, the expression of the self, the appearance of the self—Rom. 8:29.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

F. Glorification is a step in God's complete salvation in which God will completely saturate our body with the glory of His life and nature—Rom. 8:30; 2 Thes. 1:12; Rev. 21:10-11.

Rom. 8:30 And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

2 Thes. 1:12 So that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God.

Rev. 21:11 Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

IV. God became man so that man may become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. This is the intrinsic essence of the entire Bible, the "diamond" in the "box"—God's eternal economy—Gen. 1:26; John 12:24; Rom. 8:29.

Gen. 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

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.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

A. God became man through incarnation to partake of the human nature—John 1:14.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

B. Man becomes God through transformation to partake of the divine nature—2Cor. 3:18.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

1. To participate in God's life—John 3:15; Col. 3:4.

John 3:15 That every one who believes into Him may have eternal life.

Col. 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

2. To participate in God's nature—Eph. 1:4; 2 Pet. 1:4.

Eph. 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love.

2 Pet. 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

3. To participate in God's mind—Eph. 4:23; Phil 2:5. Eph. 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Phil. 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

4. To participate in God's being—2 Cor. 3:18b; Eph. 3:8.

2 Cor. 3:18b …are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Eph. 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

5. To participate in God's image—2 Cor. 3:18a; Rom. 8:29.

2 Cor. 3:18a But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

6. To participate in God's glory—Rom. 8:30; Heb. 2:10.

Rom. 8:30 And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Heb. 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

7. To participate in God's sonship—Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:23.

Eph. 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Rom. 8:23 And not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body.

8. To participate in God's manifestation—Rom. 8:19

Rom. 8:19 For the anxious watching of the creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God.

9. To bear God's likeness—1 John 3:2.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is.

10. To be Godkind—God's species—John 1:12; Rom. 8:14, 16.

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name.

Rom. 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

V. If we want God to accomplish His eternal economy, we need God to build Himself in Christ into our being, we need God to work Himself in Christ into us as our life, nature and constitution, so that we may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead—2 Sam. 7:12-14a; Rom. 1:3-4; Eph. 3:17a; John 14:23; Col. 3:10-11.

2 Sam. 7:12 When your days are fulfilled and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, which will come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

2 Sam. 7:13 It is he who will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

2 Sam. 7:14a I will be his Father, and he will be My son….

Rom. 1:3 Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh.

Rom. 1:4 Who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Eph. 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith…

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.

Col. 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

Col. 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

A. The intrinsic significance of 2 Samuel 7 is that the Triune God is working Himself in His processed and consummated Trinity into His chosen people.

B. We need God to build Himself in Christ into our humanity so that our whole being may be reconstituted by Christ—Eph. 3:17a.

Eph. 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love.

C. Christ builds the church by coming into our spirit and spreading Himself from our spirit into our mind, emotion, and will to occupy our entire soul—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 3:17a.

Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Eph. 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love.

D. As the consummation of the Body of Christ, the New Jerusalem is the constitution, mingling, blending, and building together of divinity and humanity to become one entity—Rev. 21:2, 10.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21: 10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

REFERENCE

The Practical Way to Live a Life According to the High Peak of the Divine Revelation in the Holy Scriptures, Ch. 4; The Move of God in Man, Ch. 2;

Life-Study of First and Second Samuel, Message 24-25; The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ, Ch. 2; Incarnation, Inclusion, and Intensification, Ch. 4; Life-Study of Job, Message 22.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

TO MAKE GOD MAN THAT MAN MAY BECOME GOD IN LIFE AND NATURE BUT IN THE GODHEAD

God in eternity past was God only, but in incarnation He was made man. He made Himself man that man may become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. We may be able to say that we "become like God" in life and nature, but do we have the boldness to say that we "become God" in life and nature? We need to see that we have been born of God, and we are the sons of God. Have you not been born of man? Then are you not man? If you are not man, then what are you? In the same way, since we are born of God and are the sons of God, are we not God? You are whatever you have been born of. If you have been born of Chinese, you are Chinese. If you have been born of Caucasians, you are Caucasian. Since we are born of God, we may say and even we should say that we are God in life and nature but not in the Godhead.

The church fathers taught the truth concerning deification in the first four centuries. They pointed out clearly that deification means that the believers in Christ have been made God in His life and in His nature but not in His Godhead. He is the unique God for people to worship in His Godhead, but we are God only in life and in nature, not in the Godhead. We all have to be clear that today we are God-men. Others should be able to sense that we are men plus something else. They may not be able to pin down what we are, but they can sense that we have something more. Eventually, when we speak something concerning Christ, they all will realize that what we have as something more is Christ Himself, that is, God. This is the testimony of a God-man. (The Move of God in Man, pp. 26-27)

DEIFICATION—BECOMING GOD IN LIFE AND NATURE BUT NOT IN THE GODHEAD

God's intention to make the believers God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. Athanasius referred to deification when at the council of Nicea in A.D. 325 he said, "He [Christ] was made man that we might be made God." Although the term deification is familiar to many theologians and Christian teachers, during the past sixteen centuries only a small number have dared to teach regarding the deification of the believers in Christ.

I have not been influenced by any teaching about deification, but I have learned from my study of the Bible that God does intend to make the believers God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. For instance, 1 John 3:2 says, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is." This verse clearly reveals that we will be like God.

God makes us like Him by imparting His life and nature into us. Second Peter 1:4 says that we have become "partakers of the divine nature." John 1:12-13 says that we were born, regenerated, by God with His life. As God's children we are "baby gods," having God's life and nature but not His Godhead. The Godhead is unique; He is the only One who should be worshipped.

We have been born of God and today, having God's life and nature, we are partially like Him. One day, when He comes, we will be wholly and entirely like Him.

It was wonderful for David to be a man according to God's heart, but it was not sufficient. God wants those who can say, "I am not just a person according to God's heart. I am God in life and in nature but not in His Godhead." On the one hand, the New Testament reveals that the Godhead is unique and that only God, who alone has the Godhead, should be worshipped. On the other hand, the New Testament reveals that we, the

believers in Christ, have God's life and nature and that we are becoming God in life and in nature but will never have His Godhead. (Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel, pp. 166-167)

MAN BECOMING GOD THROUGH REGENERATION, SANTIFICATION, RENEWING, TRANSFORMATION, CONFORMATION, AND GLORIFICATION

Therefore, it is through regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification that we may become God. When we reach this point, 1 John 3:2 says that when "He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is."

The issue of this process is an organism. This organism is God joining and mingling Himself with man to make God man and also to make man God. Among the Divine Trinity, as far as the Father is concerned, this organism is the house of the Father, the house of God; as far as the Son is concerned, it is the Body of Christ. The house is for God to have a dwelling place, whereas the Body is for God to have an expression. The ultimate issue is the New Jerusalem. This shows us how God became man and how afterward He makes man God that man may live a God-man life. The God-man life that we live today is the model life that Jesus Christ lived on earth by going through death and resurrection. In the Gospel of John the human life of Jesus Christ on earth was a life before death and resurrection. In the Epistles the Christian life, the life of a God-man, that we live is a life after death and resurrection. In resurrection we are being transformed daily. (The High peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ, pp. 31-32)

WE, THE GOD-MEN, HAVE THE DIVINE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S DIVINITY

As God-men, we have divine right to participate in God's divinity. The phrase "participate in" means not only to partake of but to partake of for enjoyment. It indicates that we possess something and that we enjoy what

we possess. We… participate not in heaven but in God's divinity. We all need to realize that we can participate in God's divinity, that is, participate in God.

We human beings were created by God for this purpose. Man was created in God's image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:26)…. However, at the time of creation, man did not have God's life. But now as God-men, those who have been born of God to be children of God, we have the right to participate in what God is and even to become God in life, in nature, and in expression but not in the Godhead.

As God-men we also have the divine right to participate in God's nature…. Ephesians 1:4 says, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy." Here we see that God chose us in Christ with a particular purpose—to make us holy. Holy means not only sanctified, separated unto God, but also different, distinct, from everything common. God is holy, but we are common. Only God is different, distinct, from all things. Hence, He is holy; holiness is His nature. God intends to make us holy even as He is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). To be holy is to participate in God's holy nature. Having chosen us to be holy, God makes us holy by imparting Himself, the Holy One, into our being, so that our whole being may be saturated and permeated with His holy nature. For us, God's chosen ones, to be holy is to partake of God's divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Thus, we may participate not only in God's life but also in God's nature.

Because we have become God-men through regeneration, we also have the right to participate in God's mind. This means that we, who are human, can have a divine mind. Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."… We need to let Christ's mind be our mind. In this way we may have Christ's mind.

Ephesians 4:23 says, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." The spirit here is the regenerated spirit of the believers, which is mingled with the indwelling Spirit of God. Such a mingled spirit spreads into our mind, thus becoming the spirit of our mind. The more the mingled spirit penetrates our mind, saturates our mind, and possesses our mind, the more our mind

becomes like God's mind. This is to make His mind our mind, and this is to participate in God's mind. (Incarnation, Inclusion, and Intensification, pp. 40-42)

A PROPHECY CONCERNING THE TRIUNE GOD WORKING HIMSELF INTO US TO MAKE US HIS HOME

Second Samuel 7 is a prophecy predicting that the church will be built up by God Himself among His people in the New Testament. Christ is the Only who actually builds God's house, God's temple. Christ is also the element in which and with which the church as God's house is built. In this chapter God seemed to be saying to David, "David, thus far you are still vacant and empty. Do not think that you should do something to build a house for Me. You need to realize that you need Me to build Myself into you as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Then you will have a house, and that house will also be My house."

The intrinsic significance of 2 Samuel 7 is that the Triune God is working Himself in His processed and consummated Trinity into His chosen people. Therefore, 2 Samuel 7 is a chapter on the Triune God working Himself into us to make us His home (Christ with the church) and to produce a seed (the all-inclusive Christ). Here we have a house and a seed. Christ is the house, and Christ is also the seed. Christ is the element, and Christ is also the issue. Christ is everything.

This Christ is both God's house and our house. Hence, we and God have a mutual abode. Christ abides in us, and we abide in Him. He and we, we and He, are mingled together as one entity. The universe is waiting for this. Romans 8 tells us that the whole universe is eagerly awaiting the expression of the Triune God mingled with the tripartite man through His building, which is by Himself, with Himself, in Himself, and for Himself. This is what we all need, and this is what the universe needs. (Life-study of First and Second Samuel, pp. 163-164)

WE BECOMING GOD THAT WE MAY BECOME

THE CORPORATE EXPRESSION OF THE TRIUNE GOD

In our spiritual breathing by the exercise of our spirit, we enjoy, receive, and absorb the divine substance with the divine essence, the divine element, and the divine expression. This will cause us to be deified, that is, to be constituted with the processed Triune God to be made God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. In this sense we may speak of the deification of the believers, a process that will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

Do you know what the New Jerusalem is? The New Jerusalem is a composition of God's chosen, redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, transformed, and glorified people who have been deified. On God's side, the Triune God has been incarnated to be a man; on our side, we are being deified, constituted with the processed and consummated Triune God so that we may be made God in life and in nature to be His corporate expression for eternity. This is the highest truth, and this is the highest gospel. (Life-study of Job, p. 122)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the unique burden, the unique message of Brother Witness Lee?

2. Please explain God's eternal economy.

3. Through what processes can man become God in life and in nature?

4. What are the contents of "Man becoming God through transformation, to partake of God's divine nature"?

5. How can we accomplish God's eternal economy? What is its ultimate goal?

LESSON TEN

THE HIGH PEAK OF THE DIVINE REVELATION (2)

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST IN HIS THREE STAGES

Scripture Reading:

Rom. 1:3-4 Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 Who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord;

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.

Rev. 3:12 He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Hymn:

OUTLINE

VI. The full ministry of Christ:

A. All the works of Christ's accomplishments.

B. From His incarnation to the consummation of the New Jerusalem.

VII. The Three Stages of Christ:

A. The Stage of Incarnation.

B. The Stage of Inclusion.

C. The Stage of Intensification.

VIII. The accomplishments of Christ in the stage of His incarnation:

A. Bringing the infinite God into the finite man.

B. Uniting and mingling the Triune God with the tripartite man.

C. Expressing in His humanity the bountiful God in His rich attributes through His aromatic virtues:

1. Expressing the bountiful God in His human living.

2. Mainly expressing God in His rich attributes, that is, in the unsearchable riches of what God is.

3. Through His aromatic virtues by which He attracted and captivated people.

D. Finishing His all-inclusive judicial redemption:

1. Terminating all things of the old creation.

2. Redeeming all the things created by God and fallen in sin—Heb. 2:9; Col. 1:20.

Heb. 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything.

Col. 1:20 And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross—through Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens.

3. Creating (conceiving) the new man with His divine element—Eph. 2:15.

Eph. 2:15. Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace.

4. Releasing His divine life from the shell of His humanity—John 12:24.

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.

5. Laying a foundation for His organic salvation and setting up the procedure to attain His ministry in the stage of His inclusion.

IX. The accomplishments of Christ in the stage of His inclusion from His resurrection to the degradation of the church:

A. To be begotten as God's firstborn Son—Rom. 1:4; 8:29.

Rom. 1:4 Who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

1. From eternity past without beginning, Christ was God's only begotten Son.

2. In incarnation the only begotten Son of God became flesh to be a God-man, a man possessing both the divine nature and the human nature.

3. Through death and resurrection Christ in the flesh as the seed of David was designated to be the firstborn Son of God:

B. To become the life-giving Spirit:

1 Cor. 15:45b …The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

1. First Corinthians 15:45b says, "The last Adam [Christ in the flesh] became a life-giving Spirit."

2. This life-giving Spirit "was not yet" before the resurrection of Christ—the glorification of Christ—John 7:39.

John 7:39 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.

3. Christ, the Son of God as the second of the Divine Trinity, after completing His ministry on the earth, became (was transfigured into) the life-giving Spirit in His resurrection—John 12:24.

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.

4. This life-giving Spirit who is the pneumatic Christ is also called: The Spirit of life—Rom. 8:2. The Spirit of Jesus—Acts 16. The Spirit of Christ—Rom. 8:9. The Spirit of Jesus Christ—Phil. 1:19. The Lord Spirit—2 Cor. 3:18.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Acts 16:7 And when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

Rom. 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.

Phil. 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

C. To regenerate the believers for His Body—1 Pet. 1:3; 1 Cor. 12:13.

1 Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Cor. 12:13 For also 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.

1. The pneumatic Christ became the life-giving Spirit for the regenerating of the believers, making them the many sons of God born of God with Him in the one universally big delivery:

2. The Christ in resurrection gives Himself as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit without measure through His speaking of the words of God. John 3:34.

John 3:34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for He gives the Spirit not by measure.

3. All the believers in Christ are built up into a dwelling place of God in their spirit indwelt by Him as the Spirit—Eph. 2:22

Eph. 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

X. The accomplishments of Christ in the stage of His intensification from the degradation of the church to the consummation of the New Jerusalem:

A. To intensify His organic salvation:

1. For His ministry in the stage of His inclusion, Christ became the life-giving Spirit, the pneumatic Christ, to carry out His organic salvation for the producing of the church and the building up of His Body to consummate the New Jerusalem.

2. On the way of Christ's ministry in the stage of His inclusion, the church became degraded, which frustrates the accomplishment of God's eternal economy.

3. Hence, Christ as the one life-giving Spirit became the seven Spirits of God—Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6; 3:1:

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.

Rev. 4:5 And out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which

are the seven Spirits of God.

Rev. 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Rev. 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.

B. To produce the overcomers:

1. Through the degradation of the church nearly all the believers in Christ became defeated in their old man by Satan, sin, the world, and their flesh.

2. In His seven epistles to the degraded churches, Christ calls the defeated believers to be His overcomers by Himself as the sevenfold intensified Spirit for their experience of His organic salvation in His sevenfold intensification.

C. To consummate the New Jerusalem:

1. According to the entire revelation of the New Testament, the unique goal of the Christian work should be the New Jerusalem, which is the ultimate goal of God's eternal economy.

2. The degradation of the church is mainly due to the fact that nearly all the Christian workers are distracted to take many things other than the New Jerusalem as their goal.

3. Hence, under the degradation of the church, to be an overcomer answering the Lord's call needs us to overcome not only the negative things but even more the positive things which replace the New Jerusalem as the goal.

4. An overcomer's goal should be uniquely and ultimately the goal of God's eternal economy, that is, the New Jerusalem.

REFERENCE

Vital Group, Chs. 12-14; How to Be a Co-worker and Elder and How to Fulfill Their Obligations, Chs. 1-3.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE FULL MINISTRY OF CHRIST

The full ministry of Christ includes all the works of Christ's accomplishments. Christ accomplishes so much by His ministry, His service, from His incarnation to the consummation of the New Jerusalem. The New Testament begins with Christ's incarnation and ends with the New Jerusalem. Matthew presents the birth of Christ, His incarnation, and Revelation presents the New Jerusalem, the holy city.

When the attributes of God became the virtues of Christ in His humanity, these virtues were very aromatic and sweet. This is why so many people throughout the centuries have been captivated by Jesus and love Jesus. In my youth I was occupied with the world, but then I was captivated by the aromatic Christ. He is so sweet and good. Christ attracted and captivated people not by living His human life in the flesh but by living His divine life in resurrection. The incarnated Christ had two statuses. He was the Son of Man and the Son of God, having the human life and the divine life. Although He lived in the human life, He did not live by the human life. He lived His divine life in resurrection. His human life was always put aside. He said that He did not do anything out of Himself but that the Father was the source of all that He did (John 5:19, 30). He did not do anything in His natural life but He did everything in His divine life in resurrection. He always put His natural life on the cross, and through the cross He entered into resurrection. It should be the same with us today. A brother can talk to his wife in two ways. He can talk to her in his natural life, but this is wrong. He should talk to her in his natural, human life by another life, that is, the life of Christ, the divine life, the eternal life. We have to experience this. Then we can use this truth to nourish all those whom we contact. (Vital Group, pp. 114, 116)

THE THREE STAGES OF CHRIST

The Stage of Incarnation

First, Christ was incarnated to be a man. Then He lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years. He died on the cross, and His crucifixion ended His stage of incarnation.

The Stage of Inclusion

His crucifixion ushered Him into another stage. After His death, He resurrected and entered into the stage of inclusion. In this stage Christ is the all-inclusive Spirit. He is now God, man, and also the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17).

The Stage of Intensification

According to the flesh, Christ was the last Adam. Then as the last Adam, He became the life-giving Spirit. The book of Revelation shows that as the life-giving Spirit, He became the sevenfold intensified Spirit (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). We call the above three stages of Christ the three "i" s: incarnation, inclusion, and intensification. (p.114)

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CHRIST IN THE STAGE OF HIS INCARNATION

In the stage of His incarnation, Christ brought the infinite God into the finite man; He united and mingled the Triune God with the tripartite man; and He expressed in His humanity the bountiful God in His rich attributes through His aromatic virtues. Finally, He went to the cross to finish His all-inclusive judicial redemption. Most Christians say merely that Christ died on the cross for our sins so that we can be forgiven by God. This is true, but we need to go on to see Christ's death for our redemption in its deeper significance.

Christ died on the cross to terminate all things of the old creation. He also redeemed all the things created by God and fallen in sin (Heb. 2:9; Col. 1:20). On the cross He created (conceived) the new man with His divine element. Ephesians 2:15 says that Christ created in Himself both the Jews

and Gentiles into one new man. Every conception requires a certain element." In Himself" means in Himself as the divine element for this conceiving. In His redeeming death He also released His divine life from the shell of His humanity (John 12:24).

All of this laid a foundation for His organic salvation. His judicial, foundational redemption was accomplished through His death. Then His death ushered Him into resurrection for Him to exercise His organic salvation. Thus, His judicial redemption is a foundation of His organic salvation. Furthermore, His judicial redemption is not only a foundation but also a procedure to attain His ministry in the stage of His inclusion. We should endeavor to learn all the things presented in this message and in the following two messages concerning the unsearchably rich Christ in His full ministry in three stages. (Vital Group, p. 116-117)

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CHRIST IN THE STAGE OF HIS INCLUSION FROM HIS RESURRECTION TO THE DEGRADATION OF THE CHURCH

The degradation of the church began at the end of the early apostles' ministry. In Paul's second Epistle to Timothy we can see this degradation. We need to see the three major things which Christ accomplished in the stage of His inclusion from His resurrection to the degradation of the church. In Christ's resurrection He was begotten as God's firstborn Son, He became the life-giving Spirit, and He regenerated the believers for His Body.

An excellent illustration of Christ's death and resurrection was given by the Lord when He likened Himself to a grain of wheat falling into the earth to die and to bear much fruit in resurrection. After the grain of wheat is sown into the earth, on the one hand it is dying, but on the other hand it is rising up. The shell is dying, but the life element within the grain is growing. Eventually, a new sprout comes out from the death and resurrection of the grain. According to 1 Peter 3:18, Christ's resurrection was going on while He was dying on the cross. He was "on the one hand being put to death in

the flesh, but on the other, made alive in the Spirit." According to His flesh He was crucified for our sins, but according to the Spirit He was very active. Resurrection was not a sudden event. Actually, while Christ was dying in the flesh on the cross, He was active, moving, and energized with life to rise up. (p.122.)

The purpose of Christ's being begotten to be the firstborn Son of God and becoming the life-giving Spirit was for the regenerating of the believers, making them the many sons of God born of God with Him in the one universally big delivery. Christ's resurrection was a big delivery of Himself as the firstborn Son and the believers as His many brothers, His millions of "twins." This was for the composition of the house of God, even the household of God, and the constitution of the Body of Christ to be His fullness, His expression and expansion, to consummate the eternal expression and expansion of the processed and consummated Triune God. All the believers of Christ in this one Spirit have been baptized into the one Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13a). Furthermore, all the believers who are baptized in this one Spirit are given to drink this one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13b). Through baptism we were immersed in the Spirit, and by drinking the Spirit gets into us. The best Christians are the ones who are in the Spirit and have the Spirit in them to make them completely one with the Spirit. (pp. 124-125)

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CHRIST IN THE STAGE OF HIS INTENSIFICATION

In this message we want to see the accomplishments of Christ in the stage of His intensification from the degradation of the church to the consummation of the New Jerusalem. Recently we have seen that John 4:14b shows us that the goal of God's eternal economy is the New Jerusalem: "The water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life." The Father is the fountain, the source, emerging in the Son as the spring, who flows out as the Spirit, the river, into eternal life. The phrase "into eternal life" means into the totality of the

eternal life. Each human being is a totality of the human life. The totality, the aggregate, of the eternal life is the New Jerusalem. Our God is the flowing God, flowing to impart and dispense Himself as life into all His lovers. Eventually, this eternal life will have an aggregate, a totality, a consummation. That will be the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the totality of the eternal life in the entire Bible.

The apostle Paul said that we are God's farm to grow Christ and God's building (1 Cor. 3:9). As we grow in the divine life, we are transformed into precious material for God's building: gold, silver, and precious stones (v. 12). The New Jerusalem is constituted with transformed precious material: gold as the base, pearls as the gates, and precious stones for the city's wall. If we build up the church with ourselves, with the world, or with earthly things, we are building with wood, grass, and stubble, which are fit only to be burned (vv. 12b-13). But if we build the church with the Triune God—the Father as the gold, the Son as the pearl or silver, and the Spirit as the precious stone, our building work will be a part of the New Jerusalem. In other words, our work will go into eternal life. The New Jerusalem as the totality of the eternal life is God's goal. The chorus of Hymns #976, a hymn concerning the New Jerusalem, says, "Lo, the holy city, Full of God's bright glory! It is God's complete expression in humanity." Christ has become the sevenfold intensified Spirit to intensify His organic salvation and to produce the overcomers for the consummating of the New Jerusalem. (p.129)

QUESTIONS

1. What are the three stages of the full ministry of Christ?

2. Please explain the accomplishments of Christ in the stage of incarnation.

3. Please explain the accomplishments of Christ in the stage of inclusion.

4. Please explain the accomplishments of Christ in the stage of intensification.

LESSON ELEVEN

THE BELIEFS IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

Scripture Reading:

2 Tim. 3: 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor. 15:3-4 For I delivered to you, first of all, that which also I received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

Hymn: 1255

OUTLINE

I. We believe that the Holy Bible is the complete divine revelation verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit—2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

2 Pet. 1:21 For no prophecy was ever borne by the will of man, but men spoke from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit.

II. We believe that God is the only one Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—co-existing equally from eternity to eternity—1 Tim. 2:5a; Matt. 28:19.

1 Tim. 2:5a For there is one God and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

III. We believe that the Son of God, even God Himself, became incarnated to be a man by the name of Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, that He might be our Redeemer and Savior—John 1:1, 14; Matt. 1:18, 20-21.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the

Word was God.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

Matt. 1:18 Now the origin of Jesus Christ was in this way: His mother, Mary, after she had been engaged to Joseph, before they came together, was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 1:20 But while he pondered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 1:21 And she will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.

IV. We believe that Jesus, a genuine man, lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years to make God the Father known to men—Phil. 2:7-8.

Phil. 2:7 But emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men;

Phil. 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross.

V. We believe that Jesus the Christ anointed by God with His Holy Spirit, died on the cross for our sins and shed His blood for the accomplishment of our redemption—1 Pet. 2:24; Eph.1:7a.

1 Pet. 2:24 Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed.

Eph.1:7a In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace…

VI. We believe that Jesus Christ, after being buried for three days, resurrected from the dead physically and spiritually and that, in resurrection, He has become the life-giving Spirit to impart Himself into us as our life and our everything—1 Cor. 15:4, 45b; John 3:16.

1 Cor. 15:4 And that He was buried, and that He has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures;

1 Cor. 15:45b … the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have

eternal life.

VII. We believe that after His resurrection Christ ascended to the heavens and that God has made Him the Lord of all—Acts 1:9; 2:33, 36.

Acts 1:9 And when He had said these things, while they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.

Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.

VIII. We believe that after His ascension Christ poured down the Spirit of God to baptize His chosen members into one Body and that the Spirit of God, who is also the Spirit of Christ, is moving on this earth today to convict sinners, to regenerate God's chosen people, to dwell in the members of Christ for their growth in life, and to build up the Body of Christ for His full expression—1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:4; 10:44-47; John 16:8; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22.

1 Cor. 12:13 For also 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.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, even as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth.

Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those hearing the word.

Acts 10:45 And the believers who were of the circumcision, as many as had accompanied Peter, were amazed, because on the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out;

Acts 10:46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and magnifying God. Then Peter answered,

Acts 10:47 Can anyone forbid the water so that these would not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit even as we?

John 16:8 And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment.

Eph. 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Eph. 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy

temple in the Lord;

Eph. 2:22 n whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

IX. We believe that at the end of this age Christ will come back to take up His members, to judge the world, to take possession of the earth, and to establish His eternal kingdom—Acts 1:9, 11; 1 Thes. 4:15-17.

Acts 1:9 And when He had said these things, while they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.

Acts 1:11 Who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven.

1 Thes. 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are living, who are left remaining unto the coming of the Lord, shall by no means precede those who have fallen asleep;

1 Thes.4:16 Because the Lord Himself, with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thes. 4:17 Then we who are living, who are left remaining, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will be always with the Lord.

X. We believe that the overcoming saints will reign with Christ in the millennium and that all the believers in Christ will participate in the divine blessings in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—Matt. 13:43; Rev. 21:6-7; 22:5.

Matt. 13:43 Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Rev. 21:6 And He said to me, They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely.

Rev. 21:7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be God to him, and he will be a son to Me.

Rev. 22:5 And night will be no more; and they have no need of the light of a lamp and of the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine upon them; and they will reign forever and ever.

REFERENCE

The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

PREFACE

Because an increasing number of people, both Christians and non-Christians, are seeking information concerning the local churches, we have prepared this booklet, as a basic introduction to our beliefs and practices. As children of the light, we are thankful for this opportunity to bear public testimony to what we believe, teach, and practice. We have many other publications available on various important Scripture subjects, including the experience of Christ, regeneration, transformation, the growth in life, the church, the kingdom, the Triune God, the purpose of God, and the human spirit. Detailed studies of many books of the Bible are available as well. We welcome all inquiries that spring from a sincere desire to know the truth.

We want it to be known by all that the Christians in the local churches are absolute for the common faith and are the most orthodox of Christians. We have received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. He is living in us as our life, and He is everything to us. We love Him, we serve Him, and we are seeking to bring many others to a living knowledge of Himself. We are meeting together in various localities simply as blood-washed, born-again, Spirit-filled Christians without any denominational affiliation, because we seek to give testimony to the unity of the Body of Christ. We welcome all true believers, and we seek fellowship with them as our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is our sincere and earnest desire that the Lord's testimony on this earth may be spread and greatly strengthened in order that His Bride may be prepared for His soon return. May the Lord honor and vindicate His own work on this earth in these days.

I. OUR BELIEF

A. We believe that the Holy Bible is the complete divine revelation

verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit—2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet.1:21.

B. We believe that God is the only one Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—co-existing equally from eternity to eternity—1 Tim 2:5a; Matt 28:19.

C. We believe that the Son of God, even God Himself, became incarnated to be a man by the name of Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, that He might he our Redeemer and Savior—John 1:1, 14; Matt. 1:18, 20-21.

D. We believe that Jesus, a genuine man, lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years to make God the Father known to men—Phil 2:7-8.

E. We believe that Jesus the Christ anointed by God with His Holy Spirit, died on the cross for our sins and shed His blood for the accomplishment of our redemption—1 Pet 2:24; Eph. 1:7a.

F. We believe that Jesus Christ, after being buried for three days, resurrected from the dead physically and spiritually and that, in resurrection, He has become the life-giving Spirit to impart Himself into us as our life and our everything—1 Cor. 15:45b; John 3:16.

G. We believe that after His resurrection Christ ascended to the heavens and that God has made Him the Lord of all—Acts 1:9; 2:33, 36.

H. We believe that after His ascension Christ poured down the Spirit of God to baptize His chosen members into one Body and that the Spirit of God, who is also the Spirit of Christ, is moving on this earth today to convict sinners, to regenerate God's chosen people, to dwell in the members of Christ for their growth in life, and to build up the Body of Christ for His full expression—1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:4; 10:44-47; John 16:8; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21 22.

I. We believe that at the end of this age Christ will come back to take up His members, to judge the world, to take possession of the earth, and to establish His eternal kingdom—Acts 1:9, 11; 1 Thes. 4:15-17.

J. We believe that the overcoming saints will reign with Christ in the millennium and that all the believers in Christ will participate in

the divine blessings in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—Matt. 13: 43; Rev. 21:6-7; 22:5.

II. OUR STANDING

A. We stand on the Holy Scriptures, not according to any traditional interpretation, but according to the pure Word of God.

B. We stand on Christ, the living rock, the foundation stone, the Head of the Body, and the life and reality of the church.

C. We stand on the genuine unity of the Body of Christ. We are not sectarian, nor denominational, nor non-denominational, nor interdenominational.

D. We stand on the ground of the oneness of all believers in each locality; we recognize all the blood-redeemed and Spirit-regenerated believers in Christ as members of the one church in each city.

III. OUR MISSION

A. To preach the gospel of grace and of the kingdom to sinners that they may be saved.

B. To minister the life supply to believers that they may grow in Christ.

C. To establish the church in each city that the believers may became a local corporate expression of Christ in practicality.

D. To release the living and rich word of God from the Holy Scriptures that the believers may be nourished to grow and mature.

E. To build up the Body of Christ so that the Bride may be prepared for the Bridegroom.

IV. OUR HOPE

A. We hope that as many as are ordained by God to eternal life will believe in the Lord Jesus.

B. We hope that all regenerated Christians will seek the growth in life, not the mere increase of knowledge.

C. We hope that all seeking Christians will see the vision of the church and come into the practical church life in their locality.

D. We hope that the Lord will have a remnant of overcomers that His Bride may be prepared.

E. We hope that the coming back of the Lord will be hastened by our growth and that we may participate in the blessed rapture and in His coming kingdom. (The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches, pp. 1-5)

QUESTIONS

1. Why do we need to state the beliefs of the Lord's recovery?
2. What are the main points of our beliefs in the Lord's recovery?
3. Try to explain the stand, the mission and the hope of the Lord's recovery.

LESSON TWELVE

TRUTHS RECOVERED

BY THE MINISTRY OF BROTHER WATCHMAN NEE

Hymn: 1191

OUTLINE

I. From 1920 to 1932:

A. The assurance of salvation.

B. The distinction between grace and law.

C. The difference between salvation and victory.

D. The difference between salvation and reward.

E. The difference between the kingdom of the heavens and eternal life.

F. The kingdom truths.

G. Rapture.

H. The deviation of Christianity.

I. The church, the ecclesia, the Body of Christ.

J. The two aspects of the church.

K. Denominationalism.

L. The clergy system and hierarchy.

M. The universal priesthood.

N. The presbytery, the proper eldership.

O. The difference between office and gift.

P. Baptism and the Lord's table.

Q. Head covering and the laying on of hands.

R. Living by faith in God.

S. Divine healing.

T. The death and resurrection of Christ.

U. The ascension of Christ.

V. The coming of Christ.

W. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

X. The teaching of the anointing.

Y. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Z. The tripartite man.

AA. Sanctification by faith.

BB. Christ as life.

CC. The law of the Spirit of life.

DD. The law of sin and death.

EE. A better covenant.

FF. The overcoming life of Christ.

GG. The calling of the overcomers.

HH. Spiritual warfare.

II. From 1933 to 1937

A. The boundary of the local church.

B. The centrality and universality of Christ.

C. The ground of the local church.

D. Migration.

III. From 1938 to 1942

A. The practicality of the church life.

B. The reality of the church.

C. The oneness of the church.

D. Seeing the Body.

E. The authority of the Holy Spirit in the Body.

F. The reality of the Holy Spirit.

G. The authority of the church.

H. The building of the church.

I. Coordination in the church life.

J. The Body and the spiritual warfare.

IV. From 1942 to 1948

A. The discipline of the Holy Spirit.

B. The breaking of the outer man and the release of the Spirit.

C. Using the spirit.

V. From 1948 to 1950

A. The region of the work.

B. Handing over all things.

REFERENCE

Watchman Nee—A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, Ch. 20; The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ, Ch. 1.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

REVELATIONS RECEIVED BY WATCHMAN NEE

Watchman Nee fully believed in the scriptural, fundamental faith held by all true Christians. He believed in the verbal inspiration of the Bible and that the Bible is God's holy Word. He believed that God is triune—Father, Son, and Spirit—distinctly three, yet fully one, co-existing and coinhering each other from eternity to eternity. He believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, even God Himself, incarnated as a man with both the human and the divine life, that He died on the cross to accomplish redemption, that He rose bodily from the dead on the third day, that He ascended into heaven and was enthroned, crowned with glory, and made the Lord of all, and that He will return the second time to receive His followers, to save Israel, and to establish His millennial kingdom on the earth. He believed that every

person who believes in Jesus Christ will be forgiven by God, washed by His redeeming blood, justified by faith, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and saved by grace. Such a believer is a child of God and a member of the Body of Christ. He also believed that the destiny of every believer is to be an integral part of the church, which is the Body of Christ and the house of God.

In addition to these five aspects of the Christian faith, Watchman Nee was further enlightened to receive clear revelation from the Lord concerning fifty-three other scriptural teachings, which are crucial for fully understanding and practicing the Christian faith. (Watchman Nee—A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, p. 151)

THE VISION AND REVELATION THAT THE LORD SHOWED US THROUGH BROTHER NEE

Thank the Lord that, according to what we know, as far as the history of the church and the existing state of the church are concerned, there has not been one age in which the Lord's revelation to His church has been as thorough and as high as what He has revealed to us in the past seventy-four years, beginning with Brother Nee. Through Brother Nee He first showed us the matter of salvation. In those days thousands of Western missionaries went to China. Many of them had quite a measure of spiritual worth and were quite learned. But not one Western missionary taught concerning the matter of salvation in a thorough, well-rounded way. This was the case until Brother Nee was raised up by the Lord. He not only preached the gospel, but he saw the salvation accomplished by the Lord according to His redemption, from the inside to the outside, from the beginning to the end, in a complete, well-rounded way, and he also handed over everything to us. You all know about this. If you want to know the details, you need to read Brother Nee's publications. For this reason we have compiled all his publications and printed them in three sets. Although you are all very busy, I still hope that you can read every page of those three sets.

Furthermore, through Brother Nee the Lord showed us the matter of the church. Concerning the church, the Lord showed us, on the negative side, that Christianity and Catholicism are altogether degraded and deformed. Never before had anyone spoken about the degradation of the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches in such a clear and thorough way as Brother Nee did. On the positive side, the Lord also led Brother Nee to see the local church, that is, the practical aspect of the church. He expended much effort in stressing this point. Eventually, the point of his emphasis became very clear. He enabled us to see clearly the ground of the church and the reality of the church.

Third, it was also through Brother Nee that God showed us the matter of Christ as our life. Christ is to be to us not only the Savior, the Redeemer, the Deliverer, the Grace-giver, and much more. These are not the center. The center is that Christ is to be our life. The Lord's redeeming, saving, and giving of grace are not the goal but the procedure to reach the goal. God's goal is Christ as our life. I say again, not only did the Western missionaries who went to China not stress this point; even in the entire history of Christianity only a handful paid attention to this point. This handful of people began mainly with Madame Guyon. Later, there were the mystics, and after them there were the inner-life people. Of course, Brother Nee stood on their shoulders, but Brother Nee saw something in a more thorough way and something higher, deeper, and richer than what they had seen.

After this God showed us the Body of Christ through Brother Nee. The Lord showed us that the local church is the procedure and not the goal. The goal of the local church is the building up of the Body of Christ. Here, regretfully, among us there were quite a number of brothers who were weighty, yet they saw only the importance of the local church and did not see the Body of Christ. Hence, they rose up to argue, saying that Brother Nee said very clearly that all local churches are autonomous, each having nothing to do with the others. Not one local church, whatever it may be, should interfere with another local church. This is their total disregard for

the Body of Christ. Therefore, through Brother Nee the Lord showed us further that what God wants in the end is not the local church. Although at the end of the Bible there are seven lampstands, they all become one city, the New Jerusalem.

Although Revelation 2 and 3 show us seven different churches, …the differences among the churches are not on the positive side but on the negative side. The seven churches have their distinctive characteristics only in their negative conditions, such as their failures, degradation, mistakes, and shortages.

Not only so, Revelation does not have only three chapters. If we read on, first we see the overcomers. Although they are the overcomers in the local churches, in chapter twelve we see that they are one man-child, not seven man-children. In chapter fourteen we see that they are one group of 144,000 overcomers, not two groups, and much less seven groups. These 144,000 overcomers cannot possibly be out of one church. In the entire book of Revelation we see only one man-child, one group of overcomers. Furthermore, Peter was the apostle who set up the Jewish churches, and Paul was the apostle who set up the Gentile churches (Gal. 2:8). But at the end of Revelation the churches set up by the twelve apostles are one building, the holy city New Jerusalem, the Body of Christ. (The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ, pp. 8-10)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the truths recovered by the ministry of Brother Nee from 1920 to 1932.

2. Describe the truths recovered by the ministry of Brother Nee from 1933 to 1942.

3. Describe the truths recovered by the ministry of Brother Nee from 1942 to 1950.

LESSON THIRTEEN

TRUTHS RECOVERED

BY THE MINISTRY OF BROTHER WITNESS LEE

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. Concerning God:

A. The pure revelation of the Triune God.

B. The processed and consummated Triune God.

C. The dispensing of the processed Triune God.

D. God's New Testament economy.

II. Concerning Christ:

A. Christ versus religion.

B. Christ being the person of the Church.

C. The full ministry of Christ in three stages.

III. Concerning the Spirit:

A. Christ becoming the life-giving Spirit.

B. The seven-fold intensified Spirit.

C. The all-inclusive, compound, life-giving, indwelling, seven-fold intensified, consummated Spirit, being the consummation of the Triune God.

D. The divine and mystical realm of the consummated Spirit and the pneumatic Christ.

IV. Concerning Salvation:

A. The judicial aspects of God's complete salvation.

B. The organic aspects of God's complete salvation.

V. Concerning Life:

A. The line of the tree of life in the Bible.

B. Experiencing and enjoying Christ by eating and drinking Him.

C. Pray-reading the Lord's word.

D. Calling on the Lord's name.

E. Breathing in the Lord.

F. Life is the processed Triune God dispensed into the transformed tripartite man.

VI. Concerning the believers:

A. The organic union of the processed Triune God with the regenerated man.

B. The mingling of the processed Triune God with the sanctified man.

C. Man becoming God in life and in nature, but not in the Godhead.

D. The universal incorporation of the consummated Triune God with the regenerated believers.

E. Experiencing God's organic salvation equals reigning in Christ's life.

VII. Concerning the Church:

A. The Church being the new man.

B. The nullification of regulations.

C. The saints enjoying the riches of Christ thus becoming Christ's fullness, being His expression.

D. The church as the body of Christ, being the organism of the Triune God.

E. The church as the bride of Christ, being His expansion and multiplication.

F. The organic building of the Church.

G. The church being the result of the dispensing of the processed divine Trinity and the transmission and supply of the surpassing Christ.

H. The local church being the procedure; the body of Christ being the goal.

VIII. Concerning the practice of the church:

A. All prophesying.

B. The ministry of the New Testament priest of the gospel.

C. Begetting, nourishing, perfecting, building.

D. The vital groups.

E. The blending of all the saints brings in the reality of the body of Christ.

IX. Concerning the New Jerusalem:

A. The ultimate consummation of the divine revelation of the Bible.

B. The consummation of the mingling of the processed and consummated Triune God with His chosen, redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified elect—a universal pair eternally.

C. The universal incorporation of the union and mingling of divinity and humanity.

REFERENCE

A Memorial Biography of Brother Witness Lee.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

omitted

LESSON FOURTEEN

THE COMPLETE VISION OF THE AGE

Scripture Reading:

Prov. 29:18 Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.

Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

2 Pet. 3:15~16 And count the long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation, even as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Rev. 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

Hymn: 1151

OUTLINE

I. Needing the vision to serve the Lord:

A. Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint—Prov. 29:18a.

B. Not be disobedient to the heavenly vision—Acts 26:19b.

II. Serving God in the complete vision:

A. Our vision must be from the first vision of Adam in Genesis all the way to the ultimate manifestation of the church in the New Jerusalem. This is the complete vision:

B. Throughout the ages, many people served God in the first few scenes. However, we, in the ultimate scene, serve God with the former scenes.

III. Serving God according to the vision of the age:

A. God only give people one vision in each age to cover the need of the age.

1. **In Adam is seen God's redemption.**
2. **In Abel is seen God's way of redemption—acceptance by God through the sacrifice.**
3. **In Enosh is seen man's need for God and man's calling upon Him to enjoy God's riches.**
4. **In Enoch is seen one who was redeemed and who walked with God on the pathway of redemption.**
5. **In Noah is seen one who walked with God and worked with God to meet the need of that generation.**
6. **When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, there was no vision besides His leading.**
7. **After the ascension of Lord Jesus, there was only one vision, the vision from Peter.**
8. **During the ministry of Paul, there was only one vision which was received by Paul. Even Peter who was elder was also submitting to the vision of Paul—2 Peter 3:15-16.**

2 Pet. 3:15 And count the long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation, even as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you,

2 Pet.3:16 As also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

B. We must serve God according to the vision of the age, so that we will be acceptable to God.

IV. Serving in the one stream of the Holy Spirit:

A. The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this very day, is just one stream.

B. If you receive the Lord's mercy and grace, you will be brought into this remaining gushing and flowing stream today.

C. The Holy Spirit leads us, we must follow this stream closely; our speaking and spiritual sense should catch up to the stream of the Holy Spirit.

V. Following the person with the vision being serving in the vision:

A. The examples of Aquila and Prisca.

B. The case of Apollos.

C. The examples of Timothy and Titus.

VI. Following closely the complete vision of this age:

A. We are not following any person; we are following the one vision of this age.

B. Following the consummated vision which inherited the past and is up-to-date with this age.

VII. The genuine one accord:

A. We can be in one accord today, because there is only one revelation, one vision, and one sight.

B. We only speak the same thing with one heart, one mouth, one voice, and one rhyme. This will become our morale, and impact.

C. When the Lord's recovery has this power on the earth, the beautiful condition of propagation will be spontaneous.

D. The present demand—one accord and faithful coordination.

REFERENCE

The Vision of the Practice of the New Way and Its Practical Steps, Msgs. 1-3; The Divine Stream; The Collected Work of Watchman Nee; Vol. 55; Open Window, No. 22.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

NEEDING THE VISION TO SERVE THE LORD

Proverbs 29:18 says, "where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint." This means that without a vision, the people will become loose, like wild horses in their untamed state. The clearest instance in the New Testament where the word vision is mentioned is in the case of Paul. In

Acts 26:19, while he was defending himself before King Agrippa, he uttered this word: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."…Paul was serving God in the Jewish religion, he was serving by tradition, not by vision, but from the day the Lord met him, called him, and chose him on the way to Damascus, he became a man with a vision. From that time onward, his service was governed by that vision. (The Vision of the Practice of the New Way and Its Practical Steps, Ch. 1)

SERVING GOD ACCORDING TO THE COMPLETE VISION

From the time the apostle John completed the book of Revelation until today, …countless numbers of Christians have been serving God. Added to this great number of Christians serving God are the Jews, who also are serving God. Of course, the Jews serve only according to the vision revealed in the New Testament Gospels, which has to do only with the earthly ministry of Jesus. Some serve without any vision at all. In order to serve God according to the up-to-date vision, we have to come up to the level of Paul's very last Epistles. In churches in Revelation as well as the revelation which covers all the ages, including the kingdom, the new heaven and new earth, and the ultimate consummation of the church—the New Jerusalem. Simply put, in order for us to serve God today, our vision must extend all the way from the first vision of Adam in Genesis to the ultimate vision of the manifestation of the church, the New Jerusalem. This and this alone is the complete vision. It is not until today that this vision has been fully opened to us.

In the National Palace Museum in Taipei, there is a painting on a long scroll called "The River Scene at Ching-Ming Festival." It describes in detail the culture, life, and way of the Chinese people at the time of the painting. It is not enough to see only the first few portions of that long scroll. One has to go all the way from one end to the other end before he can have a clear picture, or "vision," of the entire spectrum of life in China. In the same way, we have our own painting, our "River Scene at Ching-Ming," in our service to God. It begins from Adam's vision of the tree of life in the garden of Eden

and extends all the way to the New Jerusalem with the tree of life. The New Jerusalem is the last scene of the vision. After that there is nothing more to be seen.

Who has seen this complete vision, …? Throughout the ages many people were serving the Lord only according to the first few scenes. I wish that all the brothers and sisters would have an enlarged and far-reaching view, realize that all the books that we have put out cover the entire spectrum from the first scene to the last scene. We are not serving God based on the first few scenes alone. We are serving God according to the last scene which includes all the previous scenes. (Ch. 1)

SERVING GOD ACCORDING TO THE VISION OF THE AGE

We have to see that in every age, God gives only one vision to man. In Adam is seen God's redemption. In Abel is seen God's way of redemption. In Enosh is seen man's need for God and man's calling upon Him to enjoy His riches. In Enoch is seen a redeemed one walking with God on the pathway of redemption. In Noah is seen one who walked with God and worked with God to build the ark to meet the need of that generation.

Then in Abraham is seen God's calling, God's promise, justification by faith, the living by faith, and the living in fellowship with God. In Isaac is seen the inheriting of grace and the rest and enjoyment. In Jacob is seen God's selection, the transformation in life, and the maturity in life. In Joseph is seen the reigning aspect of the maturity in life. Following this, we see different things in Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and the judges. In Samuel we see the voluntarily consecrated Nazarite placing the ordained priests, ending the age of the judges, and bring in the kingdom age. (Ch. 1)

We must be clear that in every age there is the vision of that age. We have to serve God according to the vision of the age. Consider the age of Noah. When we read the record of the Bible, it appears as if Noah's family, including himself, his wife, his three children, and their wives were the only ones who were serving God. Can we believe that at that time there were actually only eight people serving God, and the rest were

worshipping idols and not serving God? Perhaps we have never thought about this matter. Whether or not others were serving God, one thing is certain: They were not part of those who built the ark. For this very reason their service was not recognized by God.

Perhaps some people will ask whether at the time Noah was busily building the ark there was not a single person on earth who feared God. We can deduce from historical data that at the time of Noah it is quite possible that his one family with eight people were not the only ones serving and worshipping God. The ancient Chinese were serving and worshipping also at that time. Their way of worship was in many ways similar to that of men in the Old Testament. Confucius was five hundred years prior to Christ. He once said, “To sin against heaven…" In the parable of the prodigal son is Luke 15, the prodigal said to his father when he returned home, “I have sinned against heaven” (v. 21). In ancient times, both the East and the West considered “heaven” a symbol for God. The reason for this is that whenever men lifted their heads heavenward, they thought about God. We can assume that in the ancient times many people sought after God and had some knowledge of God. They served God according to the knowledge they had of God. Yet we must realize that though so many people were serving, only Noah and his family of eight served with a vision, and only their service was acceptable to God. (Ch. 1)

SERVING IN THE ONE STREAM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The One Stream

The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this very day, is just one stream. Wherever it goes, wherever it flows, it is not many streams, it is only one. Read the book of Acts and there you will see that there is one stream, one current. This stream started from Jerusalem and flowed to Antioch, and from Antioch it turned to Asia and was flowing there. Then one day the Lord wanted the stream to strike forth into Europe, to Macedonia, but the Apostle who was working in the flowing of the stream

was not clear about it. Eventually, however, he became clear that the flowing was striking forth from Asia to Europe, and he had to go along with it. It is a familiar story. From Macedonia the stream went in its path to Corinth, to Rome, to Spain, and to all parts of Europe. History tells us that from Europe it flowed to the West, to America; and from the West it flowed to the East and to the South. In reading the history of the church we find that this flowing stream has never been stopped, and we notice that everywhere this stream flowed, it was just one. It was one in Jerusalem, one to Antioch, one to Asia, one to Europe, and one everywhere it has flowed. Please be clear that there have never been two streams. There is only one stream, and you have to keep yourself in this one stream.

In 1933 I went from North China to Shanghai for the first time in order to visit Brother Watchman Nee. I stayed with him there for several months. When I was about to leave to return to my home city in North China, Brother Nee came to me and said: Brother Lee, we feel it is the Lord's mind that you move your family to Shanghai and stay with us for the Lord's work. Would you bring this matter to the Lord? When I went to the Lord with this matter, I received the light. The Lord showed me that in the book of Acts the current of the Lord's work, the stream of the Holy Spirit, is one. He showed me that in the Acts there was only one line on the map, starting from Jerusalem and running to Antioch, from there to Asia, and from there to Europe. I saw that there never have been two streams, but always one. I said to the Lord: Lord, I thank Thee. There can never be two streams of Your work in China. If there is something done for You or by You or through You in North China, it must first be that I go to Shanghai to be mingled together in the one stream, in order that out from there something will flow forth to North China. Thus there will be one stream. On the very next day Brother Nee came to see me. I said to him: Brother, I am clear about this matter. I must do what you suggest. From this day I am working with you in Shanghai.

From that time, what a flowing there has been! I can never tell you how rich and how wonderful it is. It is all because I moved into the flowing of

the stream at that very time. Oh, the light of the Scripture has flowed as a tide! The life, the power, the energy, and the authority have flowed into me. Wherever I have gone, I have not gone on my own. I have been just as a boat in the current; wherever the current has gone, I have been carried on. It has been so easy. It has not been my strength, my energy, or my endurance; it has been the flowing of the stream. From that time, the Lord has been gradually showing me the flowing of the life, the flowing of the work, the flowing of the testimony, and the flowing of the fellowship of the Body. (The Divine Stream, pp. 14-15)

The Holy Spirit Leading Us, We Must Follow This Stream Closely

During the two thousand years of church history, the Spirit of God has been progressing all the time. Even after Acts 28, the Spirit of God is still going onward; He has never stopped. Acts has no ending. We are foolish if we think that the Holy Spirit has left the church. Actually, in every age God has always raised up some people. In every age the church has been progressing. From generation to generation, it is ever moving onward and ever progressing forward, even up to the present day.

Only those who walk according to Gods heart are blessed with descendants. Michal bore no children (2 Sam. 6:23), yet Bath-sheba, the mother of Solomon, had Sons (12:24). A descendant is the continuation of the line of the Holy Spirit—this is what I call the flow of the Spirit. We have inherited all the grace from our forefathers and ancestors; we receive our spiritual heritage from them. Is God's way an advancing way among us today, or is He moving through somebody else? This is what I call the authority of the Holy Spirit. Once we fail, the Holy Spirit will express Himself through somebody else. The authority of the Holy Spirit is like the trunk of a tree; it grows undeterred. Wherever the seal of the Spirit is, there God's way is.

Throughout the ages, the church has been like stopping stones in a stream. The work of the Holy Spirit on us is to make us stepping stones

through which He can move. This is our greatest glory. If He cannot secure a way through us, He will choose another stone to step on. If He cannot be released through us, we will suffer the greatest loss. The seal of the Holy Spirit may be at a certain place at present, but where it will be ten years from now we cannot tell. Each day the Holy Spirit is bypassing men and setting them aside, group by group. Many people seem to have lost their usefulness. Therefore, we have to be on the path of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit cannot accomplish anything through us, He must make a new start with somebody else. What a solemn matter this is!

We should always walk on the positive path. …Now is the time for us to take the way of fully functioning in the Body service. Everything should be consecrated for the furtherance of the gospel. We attend school for the furtherance of the gospel, and we work for the furtherance of the gospel. The recovery of the Lord in the church is reflected in other areas as well. When the Lord has a move in the church, He makes a corresponding move in the world. We must reach the stage in which the whole Body is coordinating together in the service and the stage in which everything is for the gospel. When the whole church is serving, the Lord's coming will be at hand. At that time not only will teaching be released but the Holy Spirit will be released as well. The church moves because the Holy Spirit moves first. As soon as the Holy Spirit moves, all will say "Amen" to His move. The Holy Spirit has moved on ahead of us, and we are following Him in this flow. Our words and our spiritual senses should all be up-to-date with the flow of the Spirit. (The Collected Work of Watchman Nee, Vol. 55, pp. 248-249)

SERVING ACCORDING TO THOSE WHO HAVE THE VISION

BEING TO SERVE UNDER THE VISION

We see clearly from the revelation of the New Testament that when the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was acting under the vision. Outside His leading there was no vision. Other might have been in tradition or knowledge. Gamaliel was very knowledgeable; he was very familiar with God's principles, but he was not under the vision. His speaking was not

under the vision; it was a speaking that we merely words of knowledge. After the Lord's ascension, it was Peter and his co-workers who were under the vision. We are not saying that Peter had one vision and John, James, and the other apostles had another vision. There was only one vision, which was the vision of Peter. This vision became the vision of his followers. When Paul was raised up in his ministry, he received a vision that touched the heavens, the earth, and Paradise (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Although Paul had many co-workers, no one except him saw any other vision. They all had one vision, which was the vision that Paul saw.

There is great controversy in Christianity about this matter of one vision for one age. However, God's Word reveals to us clearly that in every age there is only one vision. At the time of Abel, Cain did not worship idol and he did not build a shrine. He was doing the same thing that Abel was doing, offering a sacrifice to God. Under the vision, however, Abel offered a sacrifice that was acceptable to God, while Cain offered his sacrifice apart from the vision. If you were born in the age of Abel, you would have to take the way of Abel; otherwise, you would have been off from the vision and in the way of Cain. At the time of Enosh, one man was under the vision, and he called on the name of the Lord. Other people might have feared God according to other ways, but such fear was not according to the vision. In the same way, at the time of Noah there were more than eight people who feared God. They might not have sinned as others did; they might even have been serving in some way. Yet their service was not governed by a vision. Noah's family of eight people, by serving after Noah's pattern, became servants who served according to a vision. What Noah saw became what they saw.

We find the same principle in the New Testament. God's work in the New Testament is to produce and build up the church. This vision was given to Paul. This is why once Paul came on the scene, Peter's ministry faded away. When Peter was old, he said, "Our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to

understand, which is unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:15-16). This means that even the aged Peter had to submit to the vision of Paul. He acknowledged that Paul's word was as precious as the Old Testament Scriptures and that believers should take heed to it.

Based on this, the names of all those who did not join themselves to Paul's vision were eventually dropped from the record of the Bible. For example, Barnabas was the one who initiated Paul into the service, but because he contended with Paul, his name was eventually dropped from the Bible. Apollos was very capable at expounding the Bible, but 1 Corinthians 16 records that he told Paul that it was not at all his desire to go to Corinth and that he would go when he had opportunity. After this, the Bible no longer mentions anything about him. Barnabas was zealous in his service, and Apollos was capable in his exposition of the Bible, but God did not use them anymore because their service was no longer under the vision. This is a very sober matter. (The Vision and Specific Steps for The Practice of the New Way, Ch. 1)

CLOSELY FOLLOWING THE COMPLETED VISION OF THIS AGE

We Are Not Following Any Person; We Are Following The One Vision of This Age

Since we have the up-to-date and ultimate vision, we should closely follow after it. We are absolutely not following a man; rather, we are following a vision. It is grossly wrong to say that we are following a certain person. We are following a vision that belongs to the present age. It is God's consummate vision. (Ch. 2)

I would like to relate to you one fact. It is the Lord's mercy that He has revealed to me the vision. I advise you not to follow me, but to follow this vision which Brother Nee and all the servants of the Lord throughout the ages have left to us, which I have handed to you. This is indeed the vision

that extends from the first scene of Adam to the last scene of the New Jerusalem. Over fifty years have passed, I have seen with my own eyes that those who take the way of the Lord's recovery for a while and then leave do not come to a proper ending. There is only one way. All spiritual things are one. There is one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one church, one Body, one testimony, one way, one flow, and one work. If you do not take this way, you will have no way to take.

Following the Consummated Vision Which Inherited the Past And is Up-To-Date with This Age

Therefore, you are not following a man; rather, you are standing with the Lord's ministry. You are following a vision, a vision that matches the age, a vision that inherits all that was in the past and a vision that is all-inclusive. It is up-to-date, and yet it builds on the past. If you remain in the book of Acts, you may have inherited everything prior to that time, but you are not up-to-date. Today as we stand here and ponder the revelation unveiled in the Lord's recovery, as we read the publications that are released among us, we can see that they cover everything from the church to God's economy to the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. This is a bountiful and all-sufficient vision. If you remain in this vision, you are serving according to the vision. If you are not in this vision, you could still be an Apollos, expounding the Scriptures in a powerful way; you could still be a Barnabas, visiting the churches; you could still be a James, serving piously; and you could even be a Peter, who served as the leading apostle. However, you would not be in the vision.

I believe this light is very clear among us. No one can argue with this. I hope that the …brothers and sisters will all be clear about this. From your…serving the Lord, you should understand what we are doing here. This is not a personal thing. It is absolutely the Lord's ministry. He has unveiled the visions generation after generation to His children. All those who are in this vision now are serving according to God's vision. (Ch. 2)

THE GENUINE ONE ACCORD

Today we can be in one accord because we have only one vision and one view. We are all in this up-to-date, all-inheriting vision. We have only one viewpoint. We speak the same thing with one heart, one mouth, one voice, and one tone, serving the Lord together. The result is a power that will become our strong morale and our impact. This is our strength. Once the Lord's recovery possesses this power, there will be the glory of increase and multiplication. Today our situation is not yet to that point; it is not yet at the peak. Although we do not have many major contentions, we do have some small complaints and criticisms. These things lower our morale. (Ch. 2)

QUESTIONS

1. How should we serve God?
2. How do we serve God when we do not have the vision?
3. What would be the result of serving in such a way?

LESSON FIFTEEN

KNOWING THE PRESENT RELIGIOUS AGE

Scripture Reading:

John 7:39 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.

1 Cor. 15:45b …The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Rom. 8:9-11 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.

Exo. 30:23-25 You also take the finest spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred fifty shekels, and of fragrant calamus two hundred fifty shekels, And of cassia five hundred shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. And you shall make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded according to the perfumer's art; it shall be a holy anointing oil.

Hymn: 493

OUTLINE

I. Not one of today's theologies, including the Nicene Creed, stresses adequately the following five critical points concerning the Spirit of God in the move of God's eternal economy:

A. The Spirit that gives life was not yet before the glorification (resurrection) of Christ—John 7:39.

John 7:39 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.

B. The last Adam (Christ in the flesh) became a life-giving Spirit (fulfilling John 7:39)—1 Cor. 15:45b. Hence, 2 Corinthians 3:17 says that "the Lord is the Spirit," and the following verse uses "the Lord Spirit" as a compound divine title.

1 Cor. 15:45b …The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

C. The compound Spirit typified by the anointing ointment (a compound of one hin of olive oil with four kinds of spices and their effectiveness) in Exodus 30:23-25.

Exo. 30:23 You also take the finest spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred fifty shekels, and of fragrant calamus two hundred fifty shekels,

Exo. 30:24 And of cassia five hundred shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil.

Exo. 30:25 And you shall make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded according to the perfumer's art; it shall be a holy anointing oil.

D. The Spirit of life, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, Christ Himself, and the indwelling Spirit in Romans 8:2, 9-11, all refer to the compound Spirit that gives life.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Rom. 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.

Rom. 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

Rom. 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

E. The seven Spirits (the sevenfold intensified Spirit, cf. The sevenfold sunlight—Isa. 30:26) of God—Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6.

Isa. 30:26 And the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, And the light of the sun will be sevenfold, like the light of seven days, On the day when Jehovah binds up the breach of His people And heals the wound left from His stroke.

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.

Rev. 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.

Rev. 4:5 And out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Rev.5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

II. The Catholic Church, the Protestant denominations, the Brethren assemblies, the Pentecostal churches, and all the free groups are held back by their imperfect and unscriptural theology from the central revelation of God and come short of the completion of God's eternal economy because of their missing, negligence of, and opposition to the above five critical points concerning the Spirit of God.

III. The Lord's Recovery does not care for the creeds; we care only for the Bible.

REFERENCE

The Revelation and Vision of God, Ch. 3; The Divine and Mystical Realm, Ch. 1.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

TO KNOW THIS AGE

The title of this message is "To Know This Age." Here we are using the word age to refer not to the age of the world in a general way but to the age of the world in a particular way, especially in relation to the revelation of the Scriptures, the divine truths, and the genuine and proper theology.

The first matter covered in the Scriptures is God Himself. The revelation concerning God involves God's person, and God's person is very mysterious. He is one, yet three; hence, He is triune. The different understandings of the Divine Trinity have been a major factor, a hidden element, of all the problems in today's Christianity. Christianity has been divided by the different concepts of the Divine Trinity.

Understanding the second (Christ) and the third (the Spirit) of the divine Trinity has been most bothersome and troublesome. Who is Christ? In answer to this question, most Christians would say that Christ is the Son of God. However, many believers do not realize that Christ is not merely the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16) but also the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 1:5). How could the only begotten Son become the firstborn Son? As the only begotten Son He must be the only Son and cannot be the first, and as the firstborn Son He is the first Son and thus cannot be the only Son. How should we explain this? (The Divine and Mystical Realm, p. 9)

Concerning the doctrine of the Divine Trinity, there have been mainly three major schools through the centuries. The first school is the doctrine of the Trinity, which regards the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as the Triune God; this is based upon the pure revelation of the Scriptures. The second school is tritheism, which regards the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as three persons respectively with each One being a God; hence, the three are three Gods. The third school is modalism, the doctrine of God being one, which advocates that there is one God with three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—in three different stages. Both modalism and tritheism stress only one side of the truth; hence, both are heretical. The true balanced teaching is the doctrine of Trinity with the correct teaching concerning God's being uniquely one and yet distinctly three. (The Revelation and Vision of God, pp. 43-44)

THE CRITICAL POINTS CONCERNING THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN THE MOVE OF GOD'S ETERNAL ECONOMY

The Spirit That Gives Life Being Not Yet Before the Glorification (Resurrection) of Christ

The Spirit That Gives Life Being Not Yet before the Glorification (Resurrection) of Christ (John 7:39b). John 7:38-39 says, "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, if anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified."

In verse 39 the apostle John, the writer of the Gospel of John, gave the explanation, saying, "This He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive." Here John speaks not of the Spirit of God, nor of the Spirit of Jehovah, nor of the Holy Spirit, but simply of the Spirit, telling us that "the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." His word indicates an expectation—the expectation that, although the Spirit was "not yet," the time was coming when the Spirit would be there. This time was the time of Jesus' glorification, that is, the time of Jesus' resurrection (Luke 24:26). The Lord Jesus was the very God full of glory. However, He became flesh, and His divine glory was concealed within the shell of His flesh, the shell of His humanity. When He died this shell was broken, and when He resurrected the glory concealed within Him was released. From this we see that His resurrection was His glorification. Therefore, the expectation in John 7:39 was that when the Lord Jesus was glorified through resurrection, the Spirit who was "not yet" would become the Spirit who now is.

The Last Adam (Christ in the Flesh) Becoming a Life-giving Spirit

Concerning the Spirit of God not adequately stressed in today's theologies is that, as revealed in 1 Corinthians 15:45b, in resurrection the

last Adam (Christ in the flesh) becoming a life-giving Spirit (fulfilling John 7:39). Hence, 2 Corinthians 3:17 says that "the Lord is the Spirit," and the following verse uses "the Lord Spirit" as a compound divine title. The word in 1 Corinthians 15:45b about the last Adam becoming a life-giving Spirit is a strong fulfillment of the prophecy in John 7:39 concerning the Spirit being not Yet because Christ was not yet glorified, resurrected. In resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit.

Many pastors, missionaries, theologians, and professors oppose us for teaching that, according to 1 Corinthians 15:45, Christ as the last Adam in the flesh became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection. One of these co-workers, who eventually became an opponent, said that he did not believe that Chris the Son could become the life-giving Spirit. On one occasion this person told me that he believed that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit were three Gods. When I heard them say this, I told him that he was teaching the heresy of tritheism. I went on to point out that the Bible tells us that God is uniquely one. The other co-worker was troubled by three hymns I had written on Christ as the Spirit (Hymns, #493, 539, and 745). He admitted that the Bible does say that Christ became the life-giving Spirit, but then he warned me that if we preach this, Christianity will reject us. I said, "Brother, I came to this country with the burden to preach and teach this. Since you agree that it is according to the Bible to say that Christ became the life-giving Spirit, please give me the liberty to teach this truth."

The New Testament speaks of Christ's two becomings. John 1:14 says that, as the Word, God became flesh, and 1 Corinthians 15:45 says that Christ, as the last Adam in the flesh, became a life-giving Spirit. We should believe and teach both that God became the flesh and that the last Adam became the life-gibing Spirit.

The Compound Spirit Typified by the Anointing Ointment

Third, not one of today's theologies stresses adequately the critical point concerning the compound Spirit typified by the anointing ointment (a

compound of one hin of olive oil with four kinds of spices and their effectiveness) in Exodus 30:23-25. The life-giving Spirit is not simple but is a Spirit that has been compounded. The last Adam was a man, and the life-giving Spirit is divine. Thus, this Spirit must be a Spirit with two natures—the human nature and the divine nature. These two natures have not only been mingled but have been compounded, as indicated by the type in Exodus 30:23-25, which records God's instructions for forming the anointing ointment.

This ointment was not a single element but a compound. A single element cannot be an ointment. The anointing ointment in Exodus 30 was a compound of one main item—a hin of olive oil—compounded with four kinds of spices: myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. In typology, oil signifies the Spirit of God. Flowing myrrh signifies Christ's death, and cinnamon signifies the sweetness and effectiveness of His death. Calamus, a reed that grows in a marsh or muddy place, shooting upward toward the sky, signifies resurrection. Cassia signifies the repelling power and effectiveness of Christ's resurrection. Cassia is a kind of bark that was used as a repellent to repel snakes and insects. Thus, cassia signifies the power, especially the repelling power, of Christ's resurrection. His resurrection has the power to repel Satan, the serpent. These four spices were compounded with the one hin of olive oil to become one ointment of five elements.

The Spirit of Life, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ Himself, and the Indwelling Spirit All Referring to the Compound Spirit That Gives Life

Christ is Christ, and He is also the Spirit, for He has been pneumatized and has become the pneumatic Christ. Concerning the pneumatic Christ, we need to see that the Spirit of life, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ Himself, and the Indwelling Spirit in Romans 8:2, 9-11 all refer to the compound Spirit that gives life. In verse 2 we have the Spirit of life, and in verses 9-11, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ Himself, and the

Indwelling Spirit. Are these five or are they one? The life-giving Spirit is called the Spirit of life, the Spirit of life is the Spirit of Christ is just Christ Himself. Furthermore, this Spirit who is of life, of God, of Christ, and Christ Himself dwells in us as the indwelling Spirit to dispense life to us all the time. This is the pneumatic Christ.

Second Corinthians 3:17 says, "The Lord is the Spirit," and verse 18 says that we are transformed "form the Lord Spirit." Like the title Father God, the title Lord Spirit is a compound divine title. He is the Lord, and He is also the Spirit. Today our Christ is the pneumatic Christ, the pneumatized Christ, the Christ who is both the Lord and the Spirit.

The Seven Spirits of God

The fifth critical point which today's theologies do not stress adequately concerning the Spirit of God in the move of God's eternal economy is the seven Spirits (the sevenfold intensified Spirit, cf. the sevenfold sunlight—(Isa. 30:26) of God (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6).

As the last Adam in the flesh, Christ could be our Redeemer, but He could not enter into us to impart Himself to us as life. But after He became the Spirit, He was able to enter into us as the Spirit of life to save us organically, carrying out His organic salvation within us as the Spirit that gives life. In particular, He is the life-giving Spirit to produce the church. However, not long after the church was produced, it became degraded. Revelation, the last book of the Bible, speaks of the degradation of the church. Because of this degradation, the life-giving Spirit, who is both Christ and the Spirit, became intensified sevenfold. (The Divine and Mystical Realm, pp. 11-16)

BEING HELD BACK BY IMPERFECT AND UNSCRIPTURAL THEOLOGY FROM THE CENTRAL REVELATIOON OF GOD AND COMING SHORTY OF THE COMPLETION OF GOD'S ETERNAL ECONOMY

The Catholic Church, the Protestant denominations, the Brethren assemblies, the Pentecostal churches, and all the free groups are held back by their imperfect and unscriptural theology from the central revelation of God and come short of the completion of God's eternal economy because of their missing, negligence of, and opposition to the above five critical points concerning the spirit of God.

We all need to have a clear view of the central revelation of God. The central revelation of God is God becoming flesh, the flesh becoming the life-giving Spirit, and the life-giving Spirit becoming intensified sevenfold to build up the church to issue in the Body of Christ and to consummate the New Jerusalem. We need to see that the Triune God became flesh, that the flesh became the life-giving Spirit, and the life-giving Spirit became the sevenfold intensified Spirit. This Spirit is to build up the church, which becomes the Body of Christ consummating the New Jerusalem as the final goal of God's economy. This central revelation has been altogether neglected in today's theologies. The Lord's recovery today is just the recovery of these critical points concerning the Spirit of God in the move of God's eternal economy.

I am quite concerned for all the co-workers and elders. It may be that a good number of them do not have a complete understanding of what the Lord's recovery is. If we are asked to explain what the recovery is today, we should be able to answer in one simple sentence: The Lord's recovery is God becoming the flesh, the flesh becoming the life-giving Spirit and life-giving Spirit becoming the sevenfold intensified Spirit to build up the church that becomes the Body of Christ and that consummates the New Jerusalem. Regarding the Lord's present recovery, I hope that none of you would be held back by your old theology or by your old understanding of the recovery. (pp. 17-18)

THE LORD'S RECOVERY DOES NOT CAR FOR THE CREEDS; WE CARE ONLY FOR THE BIBLE

The creeds which have been highly regarded by the church through the

ages for nearly two thousand years. A creed is a rule of faith. When the contents of man's belief are enumerated and set forth in writing, article by article, these articles of faith are called a creed. Due to man's inadequate knowledge, the creeds all have some deviations and defects.

Today's degraded and deformed Christianity puts the cart before the horse, so to speak, by taking the creeds instead of the entire body of biblical truths as the standard. This is a grave mistake. Although the creeds are good, they are incomplete and even considerably incomplete. In 1828 the Brethren were raised up by the Lord. After discovering the inadequacy of the creeds, they declared that they wanted no creed but the Bible. The incompleteness of the creeds is primarily due to the inadequate knowledge concerning the Divine Trinity. Following the Brethren, those in the Baptist denomination also declared, "No creed but the Bible." Then another group, the so-called Church of Christ, also made the same declaration….When we were raised up in China, we also declared, "We do not care for the creeds; we care only for the Bible." (The Revelation and Vision of God, p. 43)

A CONCLUDING WORD

When we put together all these items that are omitted in the creeds, we can see that the Divine Trinity is indeed a mystery. The more we study the matter of the Trinity, the more we have to admit that the Trinity is truly mysterious and incomprehensible. This is why Martin Luther said that if you try to understand the matter concerning the Triune God, you will be the teacher of God. In this matter we all must say, "I have not yet come to know as I ought to know" (cf. 1 Cor. 8:2). If you say you know, then you are the teacher of God. Because the items concerning the Triune God are too mysterious, after we have thoroughly studied them, we have to humbly bow our heads in worship, saying, "Lord, how we thank You that in all these years You have released all these mysteries concerning the Divine Trinity in order that we may know how to enjoy You." If we are only for doctrinal study, we cannot adequately explain even an ordinary fish, let alone the Triune God. The Triune God is too mysterious. In conclusion, He

is the Triune God; He has the aspect of being three, yet He is still one.

Recently, a group of people in America declared that they will go back to the Councils. This means that they believe that all issues must be decided according to the resolutions of the Councils and not according to the Bible. However, the resolutions of the Councils are simply the creeds; therefore, their intention is to go back to the creeds that are seriously short. For this reason, there is an undercurrent hidden here today and there is also a warfare. If you desire to serve the Lord full time for a long time, you must have the fundamental knowledge concerning this matter. What I have given you is just a sketch to show you that our knowledge of God is altogether scriptural and that most Christians' knowledge of God is mostly according to the creeds and is therefore inadequate. Even to this day they still recite the creeds during their worship in their worshipping places. The basis of their belief is the creeds instead of the Bible. However, the foundation of our faith is not the creeds. Rather, we study the Bible daily. This is our faith and our practice. (The Revelation and Vision of God, pp. 62-63)

ADDENDUM—A HERESY IN THE CREEDS

The heresy in the creeds—the Mother of God (Theotokos)….This heresy was recorded in the Chalcedonian Confession of Faith adopted in A.D. 451. In Greek, Theo means "God," and tokos means "bearer"; hence, Theotokos is rendered "the Mother of God." This is a great heresy, for how can the eternal God have a finite human being of flesh as His "Mother"? Perhaps some may argue that the mention of "the Mother of God" is related to Christ's humanity. Yes, according to His humanity, He had a mother, but we cannot say that this mother is "the Mother of God."

Theological studies throughout the ages concluded, based upon the Bible, that our Lord Jesus is indeed the complete God who came in the flesh to become a perfect man. His divinity is complete and His humanity is perfect. As God, He possesses divinity; as a man, He possesses humanity. According to His humanity, Mary is His mother; but we can say that Mary is

the mother of the man Jesus; we cannot say that Mary is the Mother of God.

The Lord Jesus is God, not a partial God, but the complete God. He is neither just one part of the Triune God nor just one-third of God. He is God (Rom. 9:5), not only God the Son but the complete God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (cf. Isa. 9:6; John 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17). Furthermore, the Lord Jesus is also a perfect man. Just as man has a spirit, He also has a spirit (John 11:33); just as a man has a soul, He also has a soul (Matt. 26:38); just as a man has a body, He also has a body (John 2:21). Since He has humanity, it was necessary that He have a mother for the human birth. Hence, Mary is His mother in His humanity but not His mother in His divinity. Therefore, we cannot call Mary "the Mother of God." (pp. 53-54)

QUESTIONS

1. What is this present religious age?

2. Please briefly explain the lack of today's theology, including the Nicene Creed, in regard to the five crucial points concerning the Spirit of God.

3. Why the Catholic Church, the Protestant denominations, the Brethren assemblies, the Pentecostal churches, and all the free groups are held back from the central revelation of God and come short of the completion of God's eternal economy?

4. Why does the Lord's recovery not care for the creeds and care only for the Bible?

LESSON SIXTEEN

HERESIES CONCERNING THE TRINITY AND THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading:

2 Pet. 2:1 But there arose also false prophets among the people, as also among you there will be false teachers, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

2 John 7 For many deceivers went out into the world, those who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

2 John 9-11 Everyone who goes beyond and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not say to him, Rejoice! For he who says to him, Rejoice, shares in his evil works.

Hymn: 608

OUTLINE

I. Concerning the heresies of Trinity—Tritheism and Modalism:

A. Three main schools of teaching concerning the Trinity throughout the history:

1. The doctrine of Trinity, which regards the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as the Triune God:

a. Because the truths in the Bible have two sides, there are two aspects to the Trinity: the aspect of the one-in-three and the aspect of the three-in-one.

b. The Bible is not at either of these extremes; it stands in the center, testifying the twofoldness of the truth of the Trinity. In this matter, the Scriptures are balanced.

2. Modalism, the doctrine of God being one, which advocates that there is one God with three persons—the Father, the Son, and the

Spirit—in three different stages.

3. Tritheism, which regards the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as three persons respectively with each One being a God; hence, the three are three Gods.

B. The heresy of modalism:

1. Exemplified by Sabellius. Sabellius did not believe in the simultaneous existence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To him, They were merely three manifestations of the one God who manifests Himself in different ways according to circumstances.

2. Modalism has some ground in the Scriptures, but it has gone much too far, to a heretical extreme. It denies the co-existence and co-inherence among the Three of the Godhead in eternity.

C. The heresy of tritheism:

1. To press the "three Persons" in the Godhead too far will surely "lead to Tritheism". Whoever does this spontaneously falls into the heretical extreme of tritheism.

2. By denying the fact that the Son is the Father and that the Lord is the Spirit, our critics spontaneously fall into the danger of being tritheistic. Although they would deny that they are tritheistic, unconsciously and subconsciously they hold the concept of three Persons of the Godhead as three Gods.

II. The heresies concerning the person of Christ:

A. Christ having only divinity but not humanity:

1. This is the erroneous teaching of the Docetists (A.D. 70-170). They said that Christ has divinity only and is without humanity. The body which He took on Himself while on earth was not a real body, but a mere illusion.

2. Just as is mentioned in 1 John 4:2-3, this school denied that Christ is come in the flesh. The Gospel of John refutes them.

1 John 4:2 In this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,

1 John 4:3 And every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming and now is already in the world.

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

B. Christ having only humanity but not divinity:

1. This is the heresy of the Ebionites (A.D. 107). They maintained that Christ has human nature but is without the divine nature.

2. This teaching is even more absurd than the preceding one. It closely resembles the false teachings of the modernists today and contradicts the Bible to the uttermost. The Bible definitely states that Christ is man, and it also clearly reveals that He is God (John 1:1; Heb. 1:8; Rom. 9:5).

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Heb. 1:8 But of the Son, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

Rom. 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and out of whom, as regards what is according to flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

C. Christ's divinity being incomplete:

1. This is the erroneous teaching of the Arians. They said that Christ's divinity is incomplete and that He came into being through the union of the Logos and the human body. Therefore, He cannot compare with God.

2. Arius asserted that Christ was created by God, but was created before the ages, preceding all created things. Hence, there was a time when He did not exist.

3. Under careful examination the false doctrine of the Arians is found to contain three points which are contrary to the revelation of the Scriptures:

a. The Bible says clearly that "the Word was God"—John 1:1.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

b. The Scripture says that Christ is the very God who exists from the beginning—John 1:1.

c. The Bible indeed says that Christ is the "firstborn of all

creation"—Col. 1:15, and also that Christ is "the beginning of the creation of God"—Rev. 3:14, but it does not say that He was created before the ages.

Col. 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation,

Rev. 3:14 And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God:

D. Christ's humanity being incomplete:

1. This is the absurd teaching of the Apollinarians. They said that Christ's humanity is incomplete because He has the human body and human soul, but does not have the human spirit, which is mysteriously replaced by the Logos.

2. Of course, this doctrine greatly contradicts the revelation of the Bible. The Scripture clearly reveals to us that Christ is a man complete with spirit, soul, and body and that He possesses perfect humanity as well—Mark. 2:8; Matt. 26:38; Heb. 2:14.

Mark 2:8 And immediately Jesus, knowing fully in His spirit that they were reasoning this way within themselves, said to them, Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?

Matt. 26:38 Then He said to them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch with Me.

Heb. 2:14 Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil.

E. Christ's divinity and humanity being separated:

1. This is the false doctrine of the Nestorians. They maintained that the two natures, divinity and humanity, in Christ are ever distinct and separate.

2. The teaching of the Nestorians is also evidently contrary to the biblical revelation. In the Old Testament the Bible shows us that the ark of testimony, which typifies Christ, is made of wood and overlaid with gold—it a product of two natures. Gold typifies Christ's divine nature, while wood typifies His human nature. Although gold and wood are of two distinct natures, they were united as one to become an ark. This indicates that although Christ possesses two natures, divinity and humanity, He is still one; and

His two natures, though each being distinct, are not separate, but rather united into one.

F. Christ's divinity and humanity being merged into one:

1. This is the wrong teaching of the Eutychians. They denied the distinctness and coexistence of Christ's divinity and humanity, but asserted that the two natures were merged into one, which is neither divine nor human, but a third nature resulting through the merging of divinity and humanity.

2. Eutychianism also contradicts the Scripture. In the Old Testament, the Bible shows that the meal offering which typifies Christ consists of oil mingled with fine flour (Lev. 2:4; Exo. 29:40). Oil which typifies the Holy Spirit is related to Christ's divine nature, while fine flour which typifies Christ's behavior is related to His human nature. Although oil and fine flour are mingled into one, they are still two in nature—they are not merged into one to become a third nature.

G. Christ having both divinity and humanity—each being complete yet both being united in the body of one person:

1. This is the proper teaching of the orthodox school. After the aforementioned four general councils, the fifth general council was assembled in Constantinople in A.D. 553 where all those of the orthodox school acknowledged that Christ has both divinity and humanity, each being complete but united in the body of one person—without separation, without confusion, and without being changed into a new nature.

2. Our Lord is definitely the Son of God and the Son of Man as well. He is the complete God and a perfect man as well.

3. He has complete divinity as well as perfect humanity. The two natures in Him are neither confused nor separated.

4. Although He has two natures, still He is one person. His person cannot be divided, and His natures may not be confused.

REFERENCE

Young People's Training, Ch. 8. What a Heresy—Two Divine Fathers,

Two Life-giving Spirits, and Three Gods!; Concerning the Person of Christ; Conclusion of the New Testament, Ch. 3; The Revelation and Vision of God, Ch. 3.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE MEANING OF HERESY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Many Christians know that heresy refers to something negative, but not many know the real meaning of heresy. In these days, I have been burdened to put out a tract on the subject of the true meaning of heresy. If you consult a dictionary, you will discover that heresy is an anglicized Greek word—a Greek word brought over into the English language. Do you know what heresy is?

To know what heresy is, we must go to the New Testament and understand the meaning and usage of this word in the Greek language. We cannot derive the meaning of the word heresy simply by studying a lexicon. We must know both the meaning of the Greek word and its usage in the New Testament. The Greek word hairesis is used nine times in the New Testament (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5, 14; 26:5; 28:22 1 Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20; 2 Pet. 2:1). The adjective form, hairetikos, is found in Titus 3:10. In most of the occurrences of the word hairesis the meaning is "sect." For example, Acts 5:17 speaks of "the sect (hairesis) of the Sadducees." In Acts 24:5 Paul was accused of being "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." Here, a small number from the Jewish religion followed Jesus to form another group which was considered by others as a sect. Paul uses the word hairesis strongly in Galatians 5:20, ranking heresy with works of the flesh, such as adultery, fornication, and witchcraft. Immediately before speaking of heresies, Paul mentions "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions." Hence, wrath, strife, seditions, and heresies are related to each other. First we have wrath, then strife, and after strife we have seditions. Following these are heresies. This means that if we strive and fight with others, the result will be divisions that issue in sects. Thus, in this verse,

Darby translates hairesis as “schools of opinion.” To have a school of opinion means to hold an opinion that causes you to be separated and divided from others and to form into a sect.

The word hairesis is also used in 2 Peter 2:1, which says, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them.” According to this verse, heresy is a teaching that leads you away from the faith in the Lord. Therefore, considering all the nine occurrences of this word in the New Testament, we may say that heresy firstly means the causing of divisions that form sects in the Body of Christ, and secondly it means the holding of a teaching that seduces people and leads them away from the Lord, the Savior. Therefore, to set up a division that issues in a sect and to seduce people away from the Lord are both heresy. (Young People’s Training, Ch. 8)

MODALISM, TRITHEISM, AND THE PURE REVELATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

The New Testament reveals to us that our God is Triune. During the centuries, three main schools of teaching concerning the Trinity have emerged: modalism, tritheism, and the pure revelation according to the Bible. Modalism teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not all eternal and do not all exist at the same time, but are merely three temporary manifestations of the one God. Tritheism teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three Gods… I beg you to have nothing to do with modalism, for that extreme view is a heresy. It is also a great heresy to teach that there are three Gods. (Conclusion of the New Testament, Ch. 3)

Concerning the doctrine of the Divine Trinity, there have been mainly three major schools through the centuries. The first school is the doctrine of the Trinity, which regards the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as the Triune God; this is based upon the pure revelation of the Scriptures. The second school is tritheism, which regards the Father, the Son, and the Spirit

as three persons respectively with each One being a God; hence, the three are three Gods. The third school is modalism, the doctrine of God being one, which advocates that there is one God with three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—in three different stages. Both modalism and tritheism stress only one side of the truth; hence, both are heretical. The true balanced teaching is the doctrine of the Trinity with the correct teaching concerning God's being uniquely one and yet distinctly three. (The Revelation and Vision of God, pp. 43-44)

We Must Hold To Two Sides of the Truth

According to the natural law in God's creation, there is the law of balance. Nothing can exist without having two sides. For example, the earth exists because of two forces: centrifugal force thrusts the earth away, and centripetal force holds it back. This is the balance of power. All the truths in the Bible also have two sides. In order to hold a biblical truth properly, we must hold both sides of it. The pure revelation of the Triune God in the Bible occupies a central position between the extremes of modalism and tritheism.

Because the truths in the Bible have two sides, there are two aspects to the Trinity: the aspect of the one-in-three and the aspect of the three-in-one. Modalism is an extreme on the side of the three-in-one. There is, of course, ground in the Scriptures for the side of the three-in-one, but modalism, going to an extreme, far beyond the confines of the Bible, neglects and even annuls the side of the one-in-three. Because modalism goes beyond the confines of the Scriptures concerning the aspect of the one, it is a heresy on the extreme of the one. Tritheism is the opposite extreme, the extreme of the three. Tritheism emphasizes the side of the three, going beyond the confines of the Scriptures concerning the aspect of the three, and neglects the side of the one. It also has scriptural ground because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit certainly are three. But tritheism, like modalism, also goes beyond the confines of the Bible and becomes a heresy. Therefore, both modalism and tritheism, being extremes, are heresies.

The Bible is Not At Either of These Extremes; It Stands In the Center Testifying The Twofoldness of the Truth of the Trinity

The Bible is not at either of these extremes; it stands in the center, testifying the twofoldness of the truth of the Trinity. In this matter, the Scriptures are balanced. The Bible, true to the principle of balance in God's creation, is balanced and in the center; it does not go to an extreme. Regarding the truth of the Triune God, we also should be balanced and avoid the heretical extremes of both modalism and tritheism.

Throughout the years I have given many messages on the Triune God. If certain sentences in those messages are taken out of context, it may appear that I teach modalism. However, if certain other sentences are taken out of context, it may appear that I also teach tritheism. Of course, I teach neither modalism nor tritheism.

Augustine, a leader in teaching the divine Trinity, was sometimes accused of being modalistic and at other times was accused of being tritheistic. Because he taught that the Father, Son, and the Spirit are one God, not three separate Gods, he was accused of teaching modalism. But because he strongly emphasized that God is three—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—he was also accused of teaching tritheism. Likewise, when we point out the Scriptures that reveal that our God is absolutely one, that the Son is even called the Father (Isa. 9:6), and that the Son is the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), we have been falsely accused of teaching modalism. But when our writings are considered fairly and completely, it will become evident that we teach neither modalism nor tritheism but the pure revelation of the Triune God according to the Scriptures.

The Error of Modalism

What is the error in modalism? Modalism teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not all eternal and do not all exist at the same time. Rather, modalism claims that the Father ended with the Son's coming and

that the Son ceased with the Spirit's coming. The modalists say that the Three of the Godhead exist respectively in three consecutive stages. They do not believe in the coexistence and coinherence of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Unlike them, we believe in the coexistence and coinherence of the Three of the Godhead; that is, we believe that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit all exist essentially at the same time and under the same conditions. However, in the divine economy, the Three work and are manifested respectively in three consecutive stages. Yet even in Their economical works and manifestations the Three still remain essentially in Their coexistence and coinherence. The Father chose us in the Son and by the Spirit (Eph. 1:4 Pet. I:2a). The Son accomplished redemption for us with the Father and by the Spirit (John 8:29; Heb. 9:14). The Spirit works in us as the Son (John 14:26; 2 Cor. 3:17) with the Father (John 15:26). Their works and manifestations are economical, but their coexistence and coinherence are eternal. All the Three are eternal essentially. Isaiah 9:6 says that the Father is eternal, Hebrews 1:12 and 7:3 indicate that the Son is eternal, and Hebrews 9:14 speaks of the eternal Spirit. Therefore, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not consecutive but eternal in Their existence, in Their being.

The Godhead is Distinctively Three, But the Father, Son, and Spirit Certainly are not Three Gods Separately

God is uniquely one but triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 2:18; 3:14-16; Rev. 1:4-5). The Godhead is distinctively three, but the Father, Son, and Spirit certainly are not three Gods separately. The New Testament tells us definitely that God is one (1 Cor. 8:4; 1 Tim. 2:5).

Some Christians have believed that the Father is one Person and that the Son is another Person, but the Spirit is merely a power. Others believe that the Three of the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—are three separate Gods. These concepts are heretical. According to the divine

revelation of the holy Word, we believe that our God is uniquely one. We have only one God, who is triune.

Because our mentality is limited, we are not able to explain the Triune God thoroughly. Actually we cannot even define ourselves very well. How, then could we define the Triune God adequately and thoroughly? This is impossible. We can only believe what is clearly revealed in the New Testament: God is one but triune. (Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 28-31)

QUESTIONS

1. What are the three main schools of teaching concerning the Trinity? Which is the correct teaching?

2. Please explain how the Triune God is one yet three.

3. What is to go beyond the teaching of Christ?

4. What is the accurate and complete teaching concerning the person of Christ?

LESSON SEVENTEEN

HOW TO USE THE RECOVERY VERSION OF THE BIBLE

Hymn: 1218

OUTLINE

I. The translation principle of The New Testament Recovery Version:

A. The Recovery Version of the New Testament, follows the precedent set by the major authoritative English versions and takes these versions as reference.

B. This version, frequently guided by the other versions, attempts to provide the best utterance for the divine Word, that it may be expressed in the English language with the greatest accuracy:

1. Incorporate lessons learned from an examination of other's practices.

2. Attempt to avoid biases and inaccurate judgments.

C. Translating the Bible depends not only on an adequate comprehension of the original language but also on a proper understanding of the divine revelation in the holy Word:

1. Throughout the centuries the understanding of the divine revelation possessed by the saints has always been based upon the light they received, and this understanding has progressed steadily. The consummation of this understanding forms the basis of this translation.

2. This translation and the accompanying footnotes could be called the "crystallization" of the understanding of the divine revelation which the saints everywhere have attained to in the past two thousand years.

D. The determination of the original Greek text, based upon the available manuscripts, forms the basis for the text of the Recovery Version of the New Testament:

1. **The Recovery Version follows, for the most part, the Nestle-Aland Greek text as found in Novem Testamentum Graece (26th edition).**
2. **In determining the original form of any verse, the translators of the Recovery Version gave careful consideration to the larger context of chapter and book and to similar portions of the New Testament.**
3. **The most recently discovered manuscripts or the manuscripts of oldest date are not necessarily the most accurate or reliable.**
4. **The determination of the text for this version was based largely upon the principle stated above.**

E. A comparison of the English Recovery Version to Four English Versions in some major places:

1. Soul-life (Matt. 10:39)

KJV: life/RSV: life/NASB: life (with a margin note or soul life)/NIV: life/RcV: soul-life

2. Confess in Me (Matt. 10:32) KJV: confess Me

RSV: acknowledge Me/NASB: confess Me/NIV: acknowledge Me/RcV: confess in Me

3. Into (Matt. 28:19)

KJV: in/RSV: in/NASB: in (with a margin note Lit., into)/NIV: in/RcV: into

4. That which has been begotten in her (Matt. 1:20)

KJV: conceived/RSV: conceived/NASB: conceived (with margin note Gr., begotten)/NIV: conceived/RcV: that which has been begotten in her

5. Tabernacled (John 1:14)

KJV: dwelt/RSV: dwelt/NASB: dwelt (with margin note Or, Gr., tabernacled)/NIV: made his dwelling/RcV: tabernacled

II. Outlines, historical facts, and subjects for study:

A. The Recovery Version containing outlines of each book

1. At the beginning of the book

2. Embedded within the text

3. Expressing the spiritual meaning in each book

B. The historical facts as the base.

C. The subject giving the central thought of the book in one sentence.

III. Footnotes for study:

A. The Recovery Version containing over 9,000 extensive footnotes.

B. Revelation of the truth, spiritual enlightenment and life supplies:

1. Based on the progressive knowledge of the divine revelation of God for the saints in the past centuries.

2. Based on the crystallization of God's divine revelation for the saints during the past two thousand years.

C. The explanations of history, geography and persons.

IV. Cross-references for study:

A. The Recovery Version containing over 13,000 cross references.

B. Leading the reader to other verses with similar expressions and facts of history.

C. Leading to other portions of the Scriptures that relate to the same spiritual truths and divine revelation.

V. Charts and maps for study:

A. The Recovery Version containing charts of important truths.

B. Having color maps of the New Testament lands.

REFERENCE

The New Testament Recovery Version; Introducing the Recovery Version New Testament; Words of Training For the New Way; The Bible, A Lesson Book. Elders' Training, Book 3

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE TRANSLATION WORK

OF THE NEW TESTAMENT RECOVERY VERSION

The Recovery Version is translated into English, Chinese, Spanish and many other languages. Brother Witness Lee and his co-workers condensed the best of the Bible studies from the past two thousand years and integrated them into the Recovery Version. The Recovery Version has many advantages over the other versions and study Bible. (The Bible, A Lesson Book, p. 64) The Recovery Version embodies extensive research into the meaning of the original text and attempts to express this meaning with English that is to the point, easy to understand, and readable. In those places where it is difficult to express the exact meaning of the original Greek, explanatory footnotes have been supplied. (The New Testament Recover Version, A Brief Explanation.)

Through over sixty years of effort, I may say that I have studied the Bible thoroughly. In the United States, I spent twelve years to write footnotes in English for every one of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. I have studied dozens of the reference books in Christianity such as the most authoritative translations of the Bible, dictionaries, word studies, and concordances. Sometimes, just to write one footnote, I spent over a week's time and searched through nearly all the reference books. (Words of Training For the New Way, p. 22)

In 1974 I began to write the notes for the Recovery Version of the Bible. I have written these notes to expound the books of the Bible for a few purposes. The main purpose is to bring you into the truth…I do not believe you can find as many basic truths in other books as you have found in the Recovery Version. Other expositions and commentaries, for example, do not correctly point out what the main truth in the book of Matthew is. The Recovery Version clearly points out that this is a book on the kingdom of the heavens and it gives you a proper definition of the truths concerning the kingdom of the heavens.

The first purpose of the notes is to present to you the truth, and the second purpose is to minister to you the life supply. Many of you can testify

that you do not get as much nourishment from other expositions and commentaries as you can from the Recovery Version.

The third purpose of the notes is to help us to solve the common and hard problems in the New Testament. In nearly every book of the New Testament there are some questions which are hard to answer and some problems and points which are hard to understand. The notes in the Recovery Version are also an attempt to solve the hard problems in the Bible to help the readers get through them. I have had much experience as a young man studying the Bible. I came to a certain point in the Bible that I could not understand and I became stuck on that point. For instance, 2 Peter 2:4 refers to the gloomy pits to which the angels who sinned were delivered. When I read this in the Chinese version as a young man I got stuck on this point. I did not know what the Chinese meant by a gloomy pit. In the Recovery Version, however, there are adequate notes to help on problems such as these (see note 2 in 2 Peter 2:4 and note 3 in 1 Peter 3:19). For problems such as these in the Bible, I spend much time to go to the original Greek, to the lexicons, to the concordances, and to others' expositions in order to get a proper understanding. By the Lord's mercy, I believe and thank the Lord that I received such an understanding. Therefore, for each of these problems I have given you a proper interpretation to help you to understand them properly. This means to remove all the obstacles on your "driveway" that you may have a clear route and highway for a drive in your Bible study. Today we have a Recovery Version of the New Testament with nearly no obstacles on the driving way. You can drive your "study car" through any book of the New Testament without stops. If you have a problem you can refer to the notes for help.

The fourth purpose of the Recovery Version with the notes is to open up the books of the Bible. After the Recovery Version of a book had been published, that particular book of the Bible was opened to us. Because we have a Recovery Version of the entire New Testament, we must testify that the books of the New Testament have been opened to us. We have an open

book. Some teachers of the Bible admit that Revelation is a closed book and that it is too deep. Also, a number of believers were told not to touch Revelation and to stay away from it. To most believers Revelation is a closed book, but when you get the Recovery Version of Revelation you cannot say that it is a closed book. It is an open book. The Recovery Version of Revelation gives you a very brief and concise interpretation of the book. I have made an attempt to open every book of the New Testament to you… (Elders' Training, Book 3, pp. 90-92)

THE PRINCIPLE IN THE TRANSLATION OF THE RECOVERY VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Translating the Bible depends not only on an adequate comprehension of the original language but also on a proper understanding of the divine revelation in the holy Word. Throughout the centuries the understanding of the divine revelation possessed by the saints has always been based upon the light they received, and this understanding has progressed steadily. The consummation of this understanding forms the basis of this translation and its footnote. Hence, this translation and the accompanying footnotes could be called the "crystallization" of the understanding of the divine revelation which the saints everywhere have attained to in the past two thousand years. It is our hope that the Recovery Version will carry on the heritage that it has received and will pave the way for future generations.

As with any New Testament translation, the determination of the original Greek text, based upon the available manuscripts, forms the basis for the text of the Recovery Version of the New Testament. The Recovery Version follows, for the most part, the Nestle-Aland Greek text as found in Nuvum Testamentum Graece (26th edition). However, in determining the original form of any verse, the translators of the Recovery Version gave careful consideration to the larger context of chapter and book and to similar portions of the New Testament. The most recently discovered manuscripts or the manuscripts of oldest date are not necessarily the most

accurate or reliable; hence, the determination of the text for this version was based largely upon the principle stated above. Departures from the Nestle-Aland text are sometimes indicated in the footnotes.

Italicized words in the verses indicate supplied words, not found in the Greek text. (The New Testament Recovery Version, A Brief Explanation.)

Studying the Footnotes, Subject, Outline and Cross References

In full you must dive into the Recovery Version with the footnotes and the Life-study Messages. It is not an easy task to be built up in the truth. You must study the text and every note. If possible, it is helpful to take care of the cross-references. Then you need to study the Life-study Messages. You need to get into these messages not like you are reading a newspaper or a reference book. You must consider the text of the Recovery Version with the notes and the Life-study Messages as a textbook. Because this is my work, I know the nature of it. I am fellowshipping this with you to let you know the way our publications were written. If you merely read them in a light way, you cannot get into them. You must study them as a textbook…

What I have received from the Lord is always the solid truth, so it remains in me, nourishing me all the time. You must have the truth. The only way for the truth to get into you is through your mentality. Then it remains in your memory. If you do not understand, the truth cannot get into you. The truth gets into you through your mentality, your understanding. Also, if the truth gets into your memory, it becomes a constant and long-term nourishment. Then you have an accumulation of the truth, and you are a person continually under the constant nourishment. You will then know how to present the truth to others, not merely to inspire them or to stir them up, but to make them solid and constituted with the truth. (Elder's Training, Book 3, pp. 93-94)

QUESTIONS

1. What are the principles in the translation of the Recovery Version of the New Testament?

2. What are the distinct characteristics of the subjects and outlines of the Recovery Version?

3. What is the function of the cross reference of the Recovery Version?

4. Please use 5 minutes to introduce the translation, text, subjects, outlines, and cross-references of the Recovery Version to others.

LESSON EIGHTEEN

HOW TO USE THE OUTLINES

IN THE RECOVERY VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Hymn: 799

OUTLINE

I. The need to acquire the crucial points of the truth and a bird's-eye view of the Scriptures

A. Realizing the crucial points:

1. Example 1: "Initiation" in the outline Roman No. 1 and its Point B in Mark.

[I. The Beginning of the Gospel and the Initiation of the Slave-Savior 1:1-13
B. The Initiation of the Slave-Savior vv.9-13]

2. Example 2: "designated" in Romans 1:4.

Rom. 1:4 Who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord;

B. Having a bird's-eye view:

1. Learn how to put the points together to form a section.

2. Sectioning a chapter gives you a clear view, a bird's eye-view of the entire chapter of a book.

3. Get a bird's-eye view of a chapter, a book and of the entire Bible.

II. Entering into the thoughts of the Holy Spirit:

A. Merging one's thoughts with the thoughts of the Bible.

B. Finding the "trunk" and the "branches."

III. Using the outline of the Recovery Version to merge one's thoughts with the thoughts of the Holy Spirit.

A. Example 1: The outline in Mark.

B. Example 2: The outline in Romans.

C. Example 3: The outline in Ephesians.

REFERENCE

Elder's Training, Book 3, Chs. 1-2; How To Study The Bible—Entering into Three Things Related to the Holy Spirit.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

READING THE BIBLE TO RECEIVE THE CRUCIAL POINTS OF THE TRUTH AND A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE SCRIPTURES

To become rich, we need to pick up the points, we need to have a bird's-eye view of a chapter or of a section, and we also need a bird's-eye view of the entire book. Finally, we need an ultimate practice—to have a bird's-eye view of the sixty-six books of the Bible. Then the entire Bible means something to you. We need to progress from the single items of the truth to knowing the outline of a section or of a chapter. From this we need to see the outline of a section or of a chapter.

From this we need to see the outline or the bird's-eye view of an entire book. Finally, from the outline of a book we must have a bird's-eye view of the entire sixty-six books of the Bible. When you reach this point, a good foundation will have been laid with all the basic principles to govern, to direct, and to rule your interpretation of any verse, any chapter, or any book of the Bible. You are not only safeguarded but also very much enriched.

You may say that this is hard, but I do not think so. This, however, takes time. You should not read the Bible and Life-studies in the old way. Whenever you pick up the Bible or the Life-study of any book of the Bible, you must read them in this way. You must pick up the single, crucial points and have an outline of a certain chapter or a certain section. Then you must progress to have an outline of the entire book. After finishing a book you should not go ahead. You must go back to make an outline of this book. Try

to do this. This is the basic way for you to carry out the ministry. (Elder's Training, Book 3, pp. 16-17)

ENTERING INTO THE THOGHTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In writing the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit had His own purpose and thoughts. A reader of the Bible has to learn not only to read the words and memorize them but also to touch the purpose of the Holy Spirit's writing of the book at the time that He wrote it. The first thing about the study of the Bible is not to busy ourselves with exegesis but to know the intention of the Holy Spirit at the time He wrote the books. We must remember that the value of the words lies not in the words themselves but in the meaning which they convey The Lord said to the Sadducees, "You err, not knowing the Scriptures" (Matt. 22:29). The Sadducees read God's Word, yet they could not understand it. In reading God's Word, we have to find the reason the Holy Spirit spoke such a word. This leads to another point: Our mind must be well-disciplined.

Merging One's Thoughts with the Thoughts of the Holy Spirit

Those who read the Bible must be objective. They must not rely on their own mind. The Holy Spirit has a thought, and our thought has to get into His thought and merge with it. When the Holy Spirit thinks a certain way, we have to think the same way. The two have to flow like two currents in a river, the Holy Spirit being the main current, while we are the subsidiary current. The Holy Spirit is like a big river, while we are like a little stream. The stream has to merge into the river. When the river flows to the east, the stream also flows to the east. The stream may be small, but as long as it flows with the river, it will reach the wide ocean. (How To Study The Bible, Ch. 2)

Finding the "Trunk" and the "Branches"

Some parts of the Bible are subject texts, while others are explanatory

word; some are primary in importance, while others are ancillary in function. Some are like the trunk of a tree, while others are like the branches of the tree. We should not follow the branches and lose sight of the trunk. Of course, we should not pay attention just to the trunk and forget about the branches. We should find out what the Holy Spirit is saying in a passage, how He is saying it, how many things are spoken of, and how many words He has used to achieve His goal. Our mind should follow these things step by step. We have to catch up with the mind of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has a subject to His speaking, and He also has words explaining the subject….We must differentiate between the "trunk" and the "branches" before we can understand what we are reading. We cannot rush through in our reading. When the Holy Spirit makes a detour, we have to make the same detour. When the Holy Spirit turns back to the subject, we also have to turn back to the subject. We have to be very tender and very careful not to put any trust in ourselves or have any assurance in our flesh. This is the way to catch up with the thoughts of the Holy Spirit. There are "trunks" and "branches" in the words of the Bible. Yet these "trunks" and "branches" are linked together to form one unified whole….We must not take a few verses out of contest and just expound them.

If our mind is trained, it will be strong enough to sustain the light. Light comes in a flash, and it has to be captured and sustained. If our mind is not trained to join itself to the mind of the Holy Spirit, we will not have enough thoughts to capture and sustain the light when it comes to us in the form of a revelation. This is the reason our mind has to be trained; it has to be altogether objective and responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. (How to Study the Bible, Ch. 2)

USING THE OUTLINE OF THE RECOVERY VERSION TO MERGE ONE'S THOUGHTS WITH THE THOUGHTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Bird's-Eye View of Mark

I must honestly tell you that in my whole Christian life I never loved the book of Mark until I was forced to write the notes on this book for the winter training of 1983. At least one of my old Chinese Bibles contained outlines of nearly all the books of the New Testament. This Bible, however, did not contain an outline for the book of Mark. I did not make an outline for this book because I did not think it was worth it. Before preparing for the winter training of 1983, the only thing that I could tell you about the outline of the Gospel of Mark is that in the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, John the Baptist came out (1:1-4), and at the end the disciples went out to preach the gospel to all the creation (16:15, 20). Even though there was no incentive to write this outline and even though I did not have much to write, I was forced to write something to match the writing of the other books. Therefore, the Lord helped. After such a writing, I got a clear bird's-eye view of the book of Mark. I have been deeply impressed with this view especially after the writing of the notes, the outline, the message outlines, and even more after speaking something concerning these sixteen chapters in the training. I do not think it would be so easy for me to forget what I have been impressed with.

Mark gives us a full portrait of how Jesus as the slave of God serves a sinner. I do not say sinners because all the pieces in this book should be considered as a collective case. (Elders' Training, Book 3, pp. 19-20)

Here is a full portrait of a person sick of fever, leprosy, paralysis, and an issue of blood. Such a person was dying but he was made alive, he was healed of all his diseases, he was cleansed within, he was fed, and he went up to the mountain with Jesus. However, he still needed to hear, to speak, and to see, so Jesus healed all the organs related to these functions (7:31-37; 8:22-26; 9:14-29; 10:46-52). Now this person began to hear the voice from the heavens, to speak the proper thing, and to see the vision. Jesus brought this person into His death (15:16-41) and into His resurrection (16:1-18) and this person ascended to the heavens in Jesus Christ (16:19). Then this collective person came down to preach the gospel just as Jesus did (16:20). 'This is a bird's-eye view of the entire book of

Mark. This is not merely a history or a story but the divine significance of Mark.' (Elders' Training, Book 3, p. 23)

Bird's-Eye View of Romans

The bird's-eye view of the book of Romans is mainly of four stations. You must remember and be impressed with these four stations. Romans is composed of sixteen chapters with four sections of four chapters each. The first four chapters end with the word justification (4:25); this is the station of justification. From chapter five through eight is the section on sanctification. The third section, from chapter nine through chapter twelve, is on the Body of Christ. Finally, the last section is a station ending with the local churches because the churches are mentioned in chapter sixteen (vv. 1, 4-5). If you have such a bird's-eye view of these four stations you can see that the book of Romans shows us the fallen condition of a sinner who is going to be made a son of God that he can be an organic member of the Body of Christ which is expressed in the local churches. This one sentence covers the entire book of Romans from chapter one through chapter sixteen with the four major stations. (pp. 24-25)

QUESTIONS

1. In reading the Bible, how do we come to realize the crucial points and have a bird's-eye view of the Holy Scriptures?

2. Give examples of how to have a bird's-eye view of the Bible by using the outlines of the Recovery Version.

3. How do we merge our thoughts with the thoughts of the Holy Spirit when reading the Bible?

4. Give examples of how to merge our thoughts with the thoughts of the Holy Spirit by using the Recovery Version.

LESSON NINETEEN

HOW TO USE THE FOOTNOTES

IN THE RECOVERY VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Hymn: 815

OUTLINE

I. Understanding the holy writings by studying the translated and interpreted holy writings:

A. During the time of the reformation, the Lord used Martin Luther to unlock the Bible with the recovery of the truth concerning justification by faith.

B. During the time of the British Brethren, in the early part of the nineteenth century, the light came to them like a flood.

C. The interpretation of the Bible advanced even more from the initiation of the Lord's Recovery among us until now. The interpretation which began from the Trinity and Christology and has been continuing until it has now reached the New Jerusalem.

II. The purpose of the Recovery Version with the footnotes:

A. To present the truth:

1. The Holy Trinity—Matt. 28:195; Heb. 1:81; John 15:261; John 1:22.

2. The work of Christ—Gal 3:131; Rom. 4:251; Rev. 11:151, 4; Rev. 22:15:22: 21, 21:11.

3. The Spirit—John 20:221; Phil. 1:192; John 7:391; Rom. 8:93, 4; Gal. 3:144.

4. The all-inclusive, consummated Spirit—Acts 1:81; Acts 2:42; Luke 24:491, 5; John 14:171.

5. The spirit of man—1 Thes. 5:235; Heb. 4:123; John 4:242, 4; 2 Tim. 4:221.

6. The Body of Christ—Eph. 1:231; 2; 2:162; 4:41; 169; 1 Cor. 12:134.

7. The kingdom of the heavens—Matt. 5:34; Matt. 7:211; Matt.

13:241; Matt. 3:22, 3; Matt. 5:203.

B. To minister the life supply:

1. The knowledge of life—1 John 1:1:24-6; Rom. 5:173; John 3:151; John 3:162; 162; 1 Cor. 3:11,2; Matt. 26:81.

2. The dispensing of the divine life—1 Cor. 15:451; Rom. 8:115; John 20:221; 1 John 4:92.

3. The growth and transformation of life—Col. 2:197; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 3:187; Rom. 12:24.

C. To solve the common and hard problems in the New Testament:

1. Matt. 10:34—Do not think that I have come to bring peace on the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

The Lord is the Prince of peace: why then did He say that He had not come to bring peace, but a sword? The answer is in note 1 of this verse.

2. Matthew 7:6a—Do not give that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the hogs,...

Here what does 'that which is holy' and 'pearls' refer to? Why is it that they should not be given to the dogs or hogs? Please see the answer in notes 1 and 2.

3. Colossians 1:15—Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation.

Christ is God: why does this verse say that He is the Firstborn of all creation? The answer is in note 2 of this verse.

4. Hebrews 9:3-4—And after the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies. Having a golden altar and the ark of the covenant covered about everywhere with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna and Aaron's rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant.

In the Old Testament, it was recorded in Exodus 30:6 that the incense altar was put before the veil, i.e., outside the veil. But here it says that the Holy of Holies has the incense altar. Is there an error or misconstruction? Please see the answer in note 1 of verse 4.

5. James 2:24—You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith only.

The Book of Romans indicates that man is justified through faith (Rom. 3:30), not of works; (Rom. 4:1) but the Book of James says that man is justified by works. Is there a discrepancy between the two verses? The answer is in note 1 of this verse.

6. 1 Peter 3:19—In which also He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison.

Where did Christ go after dying in the flesh? What did He do? According to this verse, who are the 'spirits in prison'? The answer is in notes 2 and 3 of verse 19, and notes 1 and 3 of verse 20.

D. To open up the books of the Bible:

1. The subject of Matthew—Matt. 1:11.

2. The subject of Romans—Rom. 1:11.

3. The subject of Ephesians—Eph. 1:11.

4. The subject of 1 and 2 Peter—2 Pet. 3:162.

5. The subject of Revelation—Rev. 1:11.

III. The schedule plan for using the Recovery Version of the Bible with the footnotes:

Brother Nee in his book, The Way to Read the Bible (in Chinese), has listed twenty-eight plans for reading the Bible. Below are some of the examples, explaining how to use the footnotes in the Recovery Version to read the Bible.

A. The main characters:

1. Adam—Rom. 5:143-4; 1 Cor. 15:451.

2. Abel—Heb. 11:4; 12:243.

3. Abraham—Gal. 3:81; Gal. 3:141, 4.

4. Moses—Heb. 3:14; Heb. 3:32.

5. David—Rev. 5:52; Matt. 1:61, 2, 4; Matt. 12:31.

B. Types (using the various feasts as examples):

1. **The Passover—Matt. 26:21; Mark 12:371; Mark 14:122.**
2. **The Pentecost—Acts 2:11.**
3. **The Feast of Tabernacle—John 7:21.**

C. Prophecies:

1. **The Lord Jesus' prophecies concerning this age—Matt. 24-25, and all the footnotes.**
2. **The Apostle Paul's prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus—2 Thes. 2:12.**
3. **The Apostle John's prophecies concerning the seven stages of the church and its progression—Rev. 2—3 and all the footnotes.**
4. **The Apostle John's prophecy concerning the New Jerusalem—Rev. 21:9—22:5, and all the footnotes.**

D. The dispensations:

1. **The dispensation of the fathers—Rom. 5:142.**
2. **The dispensation of law—Gal. 3:233; Rev. 21:11.**
3. **The dispensation of grace—Acts 1:115; Gal. 4:4-5, all the footnotes; Rev. 12:101.**
4. **The dispensation of the kingdom—Rev. 11:152-4; Rev. 12:101; Luke 20:351.**

E. The subjects:

1. **Chosen—Acts 5:313; Rom. 9:151; Rom. 9:62; Rom. 9:211; 1 Cor. 1:271; Eph. 1:42; 2 Thes. 2:131, 2; 1 Pet. 1:22.**
2. **Salvation—Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 3:142; Phil. 1:194; Phil. 2:124, 5; 1 Thes. 5:82, 91; Heb. 1:141; 2:31; 6:92.**

F. Numbers:

1. **1—1 Cor. 8:62, 5; Eph. 4:41.**
2. **2—John 6:91; Rev. 11:32.**

G. Parables:

1. **Unfulled cloth—Matt. 9:161.**
2. **The good Samaritan—Luke 10:30-37 and all the footnotes.**

REFERENCE

The World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move, Ch. 2; Elders' Training, Book 3, Ch. 9; The Recovery Version of the New Testament; How to Study the Bible

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

UNDERSTANDING OF THE HOLY WRITINGS BY STUDYING THE TRANSLATED AND INTERPRETED HOLY WRITINGS

The interpretation of the Bible advanced even more from the initiation of the Lord's recovery among us until now. Once Brother Nee told me that because Europe and America had been spoiled for the Lord's move, that forced the Lord to go to China. Brother Nee said that China at that time was "virgin soil" for the truth. However, the missionaries who had gone to China never helped the people there to be clear about the assurance of salvation. The assurance of salvation is clearly revealed in the New Testament, but because most of the missionaries did not know this truth, they had no way of teaching it. The Lord gave Brother Watchman Nee a clear vision of the assurance of salvation, and many were revived by his messages on this truth. The assurance of salvation was then made very clear to the Chinese believers.

In 1935 Brother Nee held a conference in my hometown, Chefoo, to cover the victorious, overcoming life of Christ. Before that time we were not so clear about this truth. In 1940 Brother Nee opened up the truth concerning the Body of Christ and the practical life of the church. He called this the blueprint of the practicality of the local church. I brought that blueprint back with me to northern China. As a result, there was a great revival in the church in Chefoo at the end of 1942.

In the last… what the Lord has mainly shown to us is God's economy and God's dispensing, which consummate in the New Jerusalem. It is difficult to

find anything in Christian bookstores on the truth concerning the New Jerusalem. Some wrongly believe that the New Jerusalem is a material city with real golden streets. It is difficult to find some who have a biblical view of the holy city as the wife of Christ, as the mingling of the processed Triune God with the transformed tripartite man. Many years ago, Tersteegen, a German writer, wrote something about the New Jerusalem in a proper way….Brother T. Austin-Sparks wrote something concerning the New Jerusalem. Beginning from about thirty years ago, we began to see more and more concerning the holy city.

We have published many messages concerning the New Jerusalem. In these messages we cover many detailed points concerning the holy city as the consummation of the divine economy and the divine dispensing. I have to give the credit to Brother Nee for what has been revealed to us. I heard him say that the New Jerusalem will be the consummation of the church. This gave me the basis for understanding the New Jerusalem. When the church is completely perfected and established, that will be the New Jerusalem. It will first appear in the thousand-year kingdom on a small scale. Then it will appear in the new heaven and new earth on the fullest sale as the consummation of God's saved people.

The interpretation of the Bible has been built up by the entire Body of Christ through the past nineteen centuries. We inherit all the interpretation of the past centuries and stand on the shoulders of the foregoing teachers. We have to thank the Lord for this. Furthermore, we have to thank the Lord that He has shown us more in the last few decades, such as the practical church life, the all-inclusive, life-giving, compound Spirit, even the seven Spirits, God's economy, God's dispensing, and the ultimate consummation of the church, that is, the New Jerusalem, the mingling of the processed Triune God with the transformed tripartite man for God's eternal manifestation and expression. (The World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move, pp. 29-31)

THE PURPOSE OF THE RECOVERY VERSION

WITH THE NOTES

To Present the Truth

In 1974 I began to write the notes for the Recovery Version of the Bible. I have written these notes to expound the books of the Bible for a few purposes. The main purpose is to bring you into the truth. As of January of 1985, we had trainings over the entire twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Those of you who have been trainees in the trainings should have realized that the first purpose of the notes of the Recovery Version is to present the truth. I do not believe you can find as many basic truths in other books as you have found in the Recovery Version. Other expositions and commentaries, for example, do not correctly point out what the main truth in the book of Matthew is. The Recovery Version clearly points out that this is a book on the kingdom of the heavens and it gives you a proper definition of the truths concerning the kingdom of the heavens.

To Minister the Life Supply

The first purpose of the notes is to present to you the truth, and the second purpose is to minister to you the life supply. Many of you can testify that you do not get as much nourishment from other expositions and commentaries as you can from the Recovery Version.

To Solve the Common and Hard Problems in the New Testament

The third purpose of the notes is to help us to solve the common and hard problems in the New Testament. In nearly every book of the New Testament there are some questions which are hard to answer and some problems and points which are hard to understand. The notes in the Recovery Version are also an attempt to solve the hard problems in the Bible to help the readers get through them. I have had much experience as a young man studying the Bible. I came to a certain point in the Bible that I could not understand and I became stuck on that point. For instance, 2

Peter 2:4 refers to the gloomy pits to which the angels who sinned were delivered. When I read this in the Chinese version as a young man I got stuck on this point. I did not know what the Chinese meant by a gloomy pit. In the Recovery Version, however, there are adequate notes to help on problems such as these (see note 2 in 2 Peter 2:4 and note 3 in 1 Peter 3:19). For problems such as these in the Bible, I spend much time to go to the original Greek, to the lexicons, to the concordances, and to others' expositions in order to get a proper understanding. By the Lord's mercy, I believe and thank the Lord that I received such an understanding. Therefore, for each of these problems I have given you a proper interpretation to help you to understand them properly. This means to remove all the obstacles on your "driveway" that you may have a clear route and highway for a drive in your Bible study. Today we have a Recovery Version of the New Testament with nearly no obstacles on the driving way. You can drive your "study car" through any book of the New Testament without stops. If you have a problem you can refer to the notes for help.

To Open Up the Books of the Bible

The fourth purpose of the Recovery Version with the notes is to open up the books of the Bible. After the Recovery Version of a book had been published, that particular book of the Bible was opened to us. Because we have a Recovery Version of the entire New Testament, we must testify that the books of the New Testament have been opened to us. We have an open book. Some teachers of the Bible admit that Revelation is a closed book and that it is too deep. Also, a number of believers were told not to touch Revelation and to stay away from it. To most believers Revelation is a closed book, but when you get the Recovery Version of Revelation you cannot say that it is a closed book. It is an open book. The Recovery Version of Revelation gives you a very brief and concise interpretation of the book.

I have made an attempt to open every book of the New Testament to you, but I have left the further digging to you. I have only "opened up the mine"

and I have not dug that much. The foundation which Brother Watchman Nee laid in China helped me greatly. During his time, however, he told me that the Lord had not permitted him to write any expositions. Through the messages I heard personally and directly from him, through the publications put out by him and through many direct talks with him for over at least eighteen years, I received a very solid foundational word to build on. As a result, I picked up the burden to write the expository notes for the Recovery Version to open each book of the New Testament to the seeking saints. Both Brother Nee and I did not have that much time to dig further. I want to dig further and I am still digging, but I do not believe that I can do that much. Therefore, I leave this further digging matter to you. (Elders' Training, Book 3, pp. 90-93)

QUESTIONS

1. Please explain why the New Testament Recovery Version is recognized as the Bible that has been opened.

2. Please explain briefly the purpose of the footnotes in the Recovery Version.

3. How would we recommend the Recovery Version to others? Please use some of the footnotes as examples.

4. Try and schedule a personal plan for reading the Recovery Version by using the footnotes.

LESSON TWENTY

HOW TO USE THE CROSS REFERENCES IN THE RECOVERY VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Hymn: 1145

OUTLINE

I. Using the cross references of the Recovery Version to do word study:

A. Word study is different from studying the subjects.

B. This way of studying the Bible causes us to be aware of the significance of the word.

II. The function of the cross references:

A. Pointing to other verses with the same expression and fact:

1. Matt. 3:16—And having been baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming [c]upon Him.

Cross reference c—Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1; Luke 4:18; Judg. 6:34; 1 Sam. 16:13; Ezek. 11:5; Acts 1:8.

Isa. 11:2 And the Spirit of Jehovah will rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and the fear of Jehovah.

Isa. 42:1 Here is My Servant, whom I uphold, My chosen One in whom My soul delights; I have put My Spirit upon Him, And He will bring forth justice to the nations.

Isa. 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon Me, Because Jehovah has anointed Me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent Me to bind up the wounds of the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the eyes to those who are bound;

Luke 4:8 And Jesus answered and said to him, It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve."

Judg. 6:34 And the Spirit of Jehovah clothed Gideon; and he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called up behind him.

1 Sam. 16:13 And Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers, and the Spirit of Jehovah rushed upon David from that day forward. Then Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

Ezek. 11:5 Then the Spirit of Jehovah fell upon me and said to me, Say, Thus says Jehovah, You speak in this way, O house of Israel, for I know the things that come up in your spirit.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

2. John 4:14—But whoever [a]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 spring of water gushing up into eternal life.

Cross reference a—Exo. 17:6; Num. 20:8; Psa. 36:8; John 7:37; 1 Cor. 10:4; 12:13; Rev. 21:6; 22:17.

Exo.17:6 I will be standing before you there upon the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it so that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Num. 20:8 Take the rod, and gather the assembly, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes, so that it yields its water. Thus you shall bring forth water for them out of the rock and give the assembly and their livestock a drink.

Psa. 36:8 They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures.

John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

1 Cor. 10:4 And all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ.

1 Cor. 12:13 For also 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.

Rev. 21:6 And He said to me, They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely.

Rev. 22:17 And 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.

3. 1 Cor. 15:3—For I delivered to you, first of all, that which also I

received, that Christ died for our sins according to the [d]Scriptures.

Cross reference d—Luke 24:27; Isa. 53:5-6, 8, 10-12; Dan. 9:26; Zech. 13:7.

Luke 24:27 And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He explained to them clearly in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Isa. 53:5 But He was wounded because of our transgressions; He was crushed because of our iniquities; The chastening for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we have been healed.

Isa. 53:6 We all like sheep have gone astray; Each of us has turned to his own way, And Jehovah has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

Isa. 53:8 By oppression and by judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who among them had the thought That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?

Isa. 53:10 But Jehovah was pleased to crush Him, to afflict Him with grief. When He makes Himself an offering for sin, He will see a seed, He will extend His days, And the pleasure of Jehovah will prosper in His hand.

Isa. 53:11 He will see the fruit of the travail of His soul, And He will be satisfied; By the knowledge of Him, the righteous One, My Servant, will make the many righteous, And He will bear their iniquities.

Isa. 53:12 Therefore I will divide to Him a portion with the Great, And He will divide the spoil with the Strong; Because He poured out His life unto death And was numbered with the transgressors, Yet He alone bore the sin of many And interceded for the transgressors.

Dan. 9:26 And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah will be cut off and will have nothing; and the people of the prince who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end of it will be with a flood, and even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

Zech. 13:7 Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man who is My Fellow, Declares Jehovah of hosts. Strike the Shepherd, That the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand upon the little ones.

4. 1 Thes. 4:3—For this is the will of God, your [b]sanctification: that you abstain from fornication.

Cross reference b—1 Thes. 4:4, 7; 5:23; 2 Thes. 2:13; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Thes. 3:13.

1 Thes. 4:4 That each one of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.

1 Thes. 4:7 For God has not called us for uncleanness but in sanctification.

1 Thes. 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your

spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thes. 2:13 But we ought to thank God always concerning you, brothers beloved of the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

1 Cor. 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

1 Thes. 3:13 So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

5. Rev. 4:1—After these things I saw, and behold, a door [b]opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will show you the things that must take place after these things.

Cross reference b—Rev. 19:11; Ezek. 1:1; Matt. 3:16; Acts 7:56; 10:11; John 1:51; Rev. 11:19.

Rev. 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

Ezek. 1:1 Now in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth of the month, while I was among the captives by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

Matt. 3:16 And having been baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him.

Acts 7:56 And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

Acts 10:11 And he beheld heaven opened, and a certain vessel like a great sheet descending, being let down by four corners onto the earth.

John 1:51 And He said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, You shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

Rev. 11:19 And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple; and there were lightnings and voices and thunders and an earthquake and great hail.

6. Mark 12:33—And to love Him from the whole heart and from the whole understanding and from the whole strength and to love one's neighbor as himself is much more than all the burnt [a]offerings and sacrifices.

Cross reference a—1 Sam. 15:22; Psa. 40:6; 51:16; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8.

2 Sam. 15:22 And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the little ones with him passed over.

Psa. 40:6 You do not delight in sacrifice and offering; You have prepared ears for Me; You do not require burnt offering and sin offering.

Psa. 51:16 For You do not delight in sacrifice; Otherwise I would offer it; You take no pleasure in burnt offerings.

Hosea 6:6 For I delight in lovingkindness and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

Micah 6:6 With what shall I come before Jehovah And bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With one-year-old calves?

Micah 6:7 Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, With tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

Micah 6:8 He has declared to you, O man, what is good; And what does Jehovah require of you, But that you would execute justice and love mercy And walk humbly with your God?

B. Pointing to related matters and verses according to spiritual revelation:

1. Rom. 8:16—The Spirit Himself witnesses with our [b]spirit that we are children of God.

Cross reference b—Zech. 12:1; Job 32:8; Prov. 20:27; John 4:24; 1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12; Rom. 1:9; 1 Cor. 5:4; 16:18; 2 Tim. 4:22; Gal. 6:18.

Zech. 12:1 Thus declares Jehovah, who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him.

Job 32:8 But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding.

Prov. 20:27 The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, Searching all the innermost parts of the inner being.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

1 Thes. 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and

intentions of the heart.

Rom. 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers.

1 Cor. 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you and my spirit have been assembled, with the power of our Lord Jesus.

1 Cor. 16:18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Acknowledge therefore such ones.

2 Tim. 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Gal. 6:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

2. Col. 1:15—Who is the [a]image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation.

Cross reference a—Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 4:4; Gen. 1:26; Heb. 1:3; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29.

Col. 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

2 Cor. 4:4 In whom the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them.

Gen. 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Heb.1:3 Who, being the effulgence of His glory and the impress of His substance and upholding and bearing all things by the word of His power, having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

1 Cor. 3:18 Let no one deceive himself; if anyone thinks that he is wise among you in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

3. Eph. 1:9—Making known to us the [a]mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself.

Cross reference a—Eph. 3:3-4, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col. 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3; Rom. 16:25.

Eph. 3:3 That by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief,

Eph. 3:4 By which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.

Eph. 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

Eph. 6:19 And for me, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel.

Col. 1:26 The mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations but now has been manifested to His saints;

Col. 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Col. 2:2 That their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ.

Col. 4:3 Praying at the same time for us also, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ (because of which also I am bound).

Rom. 16:25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, that is, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages.

4. Eph. 1:19—And what is the surpassing greatness of His [a]power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength.

Cross reference a—Eph. 3:7, 16, 20; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:11, 29; 2 Tim. 1:8.

Eph. 3:7 Of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the operation of His power.

Eph. 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man.

Eph. 3:20 But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us.

Phil. 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

Col. 1:11 Being empowered with all power, according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy.

Col.1:29 For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.

2 Tim.1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me

His prisoner; but suffer evil with the gospel according to the power of God.

5. 1 John 1:5—And this is the message which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is [b]light and in Him is no darkness at all.

Cross reference b—1 John 2:8; John 1:4-5, 9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36; 1 Tim. 6:16; James 1:17.

1 John 2:8 Yet again a new commandment I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

John 1:4 n Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 1:5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

John 1:9 This was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil.

John 3:20 For every one who practices evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his works be reproved.

John 3:21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be manifested that they are wrought in God.

John 8:12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 9:5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

John 12:35 Jesus then said to them, The light is still among you a little while. Walk while you have the light so that darkness may not overcome you; and he who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.

John 12:36 While you have the light, believe into the light, so that you may become sons of light. Jesus said these things, and He went away and was hidden from them.

1 Tim.6:16 Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen nor can see, to whom be honor and eternal might. Amen.

James 1:17 All good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variation or shadow cast by turning.

6. 1 John 2:6—He who says he [a]abides in Him ought himself also to

walk even as He walked.

Cross reference a—1 John 2:24, 27-28; 3:6, 24; 4:13, 15-16; John 6:56; 15:4 5, 7; 1 John 2:10; 3:14; 2 John 9.

1 John 2:24 As for you, that which you heard from the beginning, let it abide in you. If that which you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, so that if He is manifested, we may have boldness and not be put to shame from Him at His coming.

1 John 3:6 Everyone who abides in Him does not sin; everyone who sins has not seen Him or known Him.

1 John 3:24 And he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And in this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He gave to us.

1 John 4:13 In this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, that He has given to us of His Spirit.

1 John 4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.

1 John 4:16 And we know and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.

John 6:56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.

John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

1 John 2:10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause of stumbling in him.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death.

2 John 9 Everyone who goes beyond and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

7. Rom. 10:12—For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who [d]call upon Him.

Cross reference d—Acts 7:59; 9:14; 22:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:22; Gen. 4:26; 12:8; Deut. 4:7; Psa. 99:6; 116:17; 145:18; Isa. 12:2-4; 55:6; 64:7; Lam. 3:55-57.

Acts 7:59 And they stoned Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!

Acts 9:14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Your name.

Acts 20:16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying so that if possible he might be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

1 Cor. 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:

2 Tim. 2:22 But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Gen. 4:26 And to Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of Jehovah.

Gen. 12:8 And he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to Jehovah and called upon the name of Jehovah.

Deut. 4:7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as Jehovah our God is whenever we call upon Him?

Psa. 99:6 Moses and Aaron among His priests, / And Samuel among those who called on His name—/ They called out to Jehovah, / And He answered them.

Psa. 116:17 To You I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, / And I will call upon the name of Jehovah.

Psa. 145:18 Jehovah is near to all who call upon Him, / To all who call upon Him in truth.

Isa. 12:2 God is now my salvation; / I will trust and not dread; / For Jah Jehovah is my strength and song, / And He has become my salvation.

Isa. 12:3 Therefore you will draw water with rejoicing / From the springs of salvation,

Isa. 12:4 And you will say in that day, / Give thanks to Jehovah; call upon His name! / Make His deeds known among the peoples; / Remind them that His name is exalted.

Isa. 55:6 Seek Jehovah while He may be found; / Call upon Him while He is near.

Isa. 64:7 And there is no one who calls upon Your name, / Who stirs himself up

to lay hold of You; / For You have hidden Your face from us / And have consumed us by our iniquities.

Lam. 3:55 I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, / From the lowest pit.

Lam. 3:56 You have heard my voice; do not hide / Your ear at my breathing, at my cry.

Lam. 3:57 You drew near in the day that I called upon You; / You said, Do not fear.

8. Rom. 5:2—Through whom also we have obtained access by faith into this [a]grace in which we stand and boast because of the hope of the glory of God.

Cross reference a—Rom. 1:7; 3:24; 5:15, 17, 20-21; 6:14; 16:20; John 1:14, 16; Eph. 1:6-7; 2:5, 7-8; 1 Tim. 1:14; Phil. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:2; 3:7; 4:10; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Tim. 2:1; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; 13:14; Gal. 5:4; 6:18.

Rom. 1:7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, the called saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. 3:24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Rom. 5:15 But it is not that as the offense was, so also the gracious gift is; for if by the offense of the one the many died, much more the grace of God and the free gift in grace of the one man Jesus Christ have abounded to the many.

Rom. 5:17 For if, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Rom. 5:20 And the law entered in alongside that the offense might abound; but where sin abounded, grace has superabounded,

Rom. 5:21 In order that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom. 6:14 For sin will not lord it over you, for you are not under the law but under grace.

Rom. 16:20 Now the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

John 1:16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

Eph. 1:6 To the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved;

Eph. 1:7 In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of

offenses, according to the riches of His grace,

Eph. 2:5 Even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)

Eph. 2:7 That He might display in the ages to come the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Eph. 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God;

1 Tim. 1:14 And the grace of our Lord superabounded with faith and love in Christ Jesus.

Phil. 1:7 Even as it is right for me to think this concerning you all because you have me in your heart, since both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel you are all fellow partakers with me of grace.

1 Pet. 1:2 Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

1 Pet. 3:7 Husbands, in like manner dwell together with them according to knowledge, as with the weaker, female vessel, assigning honor to them as also to fellow heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Pet. 4:10 Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

2 Pet. 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and unto the day of eternity. Amen.

2 Tim. 2:1 You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus;

1 Cor. 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace unto me did not turn out to be in vain, but, on the contrary, I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God which is with me.

2 Cor. 12:9 And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Gal. 5:4 You have been brought to nought, separated from Christ, you who are being justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Gal. 6:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

9. Rom. 8:18—For I consider that the sufferings of this present time

are not worthy to be compared with the coming [a]glory to be revealed upon us.

Cross reference a—Rom. 5:2; 8:21; 9:23; 1 Cor. 2:7; 2 Cor. 4:17; Eph. 1:18; Col. 1:27; 3:4; 1 Thes. 2:12; 2 Tim. 2:10; Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:7; 5:10.

Rom. 5:2 Through whom also we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and boast because of the hope of the glory of God.

Rom.8:21 In hope that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Rom.9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory.

1 Cor.2:7 But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the wisdom which has been hidden, which God predestined before the ages for our glory.

2 Cor. 4:17 For our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory.

Eph.1:1 The eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Col.1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Col.3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

1 Thes. 2:12 So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

2 Tim. 2:10 Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the chosen ones, that they themselves also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Heb. 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

1 Pet. 1:7 So that the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Pet. 5:10 But the God of all grace, He who has called you into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself perfect, establish, strengthen, and ground you.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the special usages of the cross references in studying the Bible?

2. What is the function of the cross references?

3. Please look up the cross references on the word “call” in Romans 10:12, and share the revelation you have received.

3. Please look up the cross references on the word “grace” in Romans 5:2, and share the revelation you have received.

LESSON TWENTY-ONE

HOW TO USE THE HOLY WORD FOR MORNING REVIVAL

Scripture Reading:

Judg. 5:31 May all Your enemies so perish, O Jehovah. But may those who love Him be like the sun when it rises in its might. And the land had rest forty years.

Prov. 4:18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until the full day.

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God.

Hymn: 554

OUTLINE

I. The Christian revival occurs in the morning—Judges 5:31; Prov. 4:18:

Judg. 5:31 May all Your enemies so perish, O Jehovah. But may those who love Him be like the sun When it rises in its might. And the land had rest forty years.

Prov. 4:18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, Which shines brighter and brighter until the full day.

A. Our life following the moving of the sun.

B. Calling on the name of the Lord—2 Tim. 1:7; Rom. 10:12-13.

2 Tim. 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.

Rom. 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;

Rom. 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

C. Pray-reading the Lord's Word—Eph. 6:17.

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God.

II. Making a good use of the morning revival materials:

A. Getting revived in the morning by calling on the name of the Lord to contact Him.

B. Using two or three verses to enjoy the Lord to breath in the Lord's rich supply.

C. Just like eating our breakfast, we may spend ten or twenty minutes to eat the spiritual food before the Lord every morning that our spirit may be daily satisfied.

D. Read repeatedly, read by emphasizing, read by applying to yourself in a living way, and read prayerfully.

E. Pray and pray-read in many ways to receive the life supply.

F. Only Christ is the reality and only the Spirit gives life.

III. Studying the interpreted and opened Bible to learn the divine truth.

A. The footnotes in the New Testament Recovery Version.

B. The outline of every message.

IV. Using the Hymns in a living way.

V. Writing a prophecy:

A. The daily written notes are the reaping of enlightenment and spiritual inspiration.

B. Composed with one main point and a few sub points.

C. To speak in the church meetings for the organic building up of the Body of Christ.

REFERENCE

The Organic Practice of the New Way, Chs. 1, 4; Holy Word for Morning Revival, Preface; Bearing Remaining Fruit, Vol. 1, Ch. 13; The World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move, Ch. 2.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE CHRISTIAN REVIVAL OCCURS IN THE MORNING

We can discover one law from man's physical life. The human body needs a revival every morning. After we rise up in the morning, our whole body needs a revival. We need to wash our faces. After that, all our sluggish feeling is washed away. After we wash our face and our mouth, and cleanse our lungs through deep breathing, our whole being is renewed. This proves that every morning the human body needs a renewal. The morning hour flies by quickly. One hour is over in no time. This is why the Word of the Lord says, "Redeeming the time" (Eph. 5:16). The period of time that needs to be redeemed the most is six to seven o'clock in the morning. During this hour, every minute is precious. We have to redeem this time. (The Organic Practice of the New Way, pp. 45-46)

Hence, our time in the morning is most precious. It is best for us to spend as little time as possible on other things and to spend this time instead on pray-reading. In order to save time, when I am dressing in the morning, I begin to call on the Lord and pray-read His word. If your wife is not awake yet, you should not shout and cry aloud. You can pray from within. While you are putting on your shirt, you can pray-read the verse you read yesterday: "In the beginning…God…created…the heavens…and the earth." While you are washing up, you can also pray-read. You can do two things at one time. Perhaps at the beginning you do not feel comfortable doing it. But after a while, you will feel comfortable. If you would spend half an hour or even fifty minutes there praying and reading the Lord's word, and finally mingling the praying with the reading, your spirit will be enlivened. With such a morning, your whole being will have a revival.

The Christian revival does not occur in the afternoon or at sunset. Rather it occurs in the morning. The Christian life is not a sunset. Rather it is a dawning of the sun. In fact, we ourselves are the sun. Judges 5:31 says, "Let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." Proverbs 4:18 says, "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." A Christian's life should be

one that follows the moving of the sun. When the sun rises, we should rise with it. We keep rising until the perfect day, which is noon. The Christian life does not have afternoons. Whether we are among the worldly people, or in the church meetings, we should bring the shining light to others. For this reason, it does not matter how busy we are, we have to spend some time to exercise our spirit. (pp. 49-50)

When the Holy Spirit washes us within, it brings in a renewing. This is the first lesson early in the morning for every Christian. I myself exercise this way. In the morning when I wake up, I do not speak to man first. Rather, I first speak to God. I would not open my mouth to any man before I open my mouth to God. I would say, "O Lord, I love You!" "Lord Jesus, I am coming to You!" Every morning, all I do are these two things: calling on the name of the Lord and pray-reading His word. These two things are the morning exercises for a Christian. If you would exercise yourself in these two things every morning, surely you will be revived. You will become the rising sun, with the shining, dawning light that shines brighter and brighter until the perfect day. Fifty years ago, I read the verse in Judges 5 that says that those who love the Lord are as the sun that goes forth in its might, and I told the Lord, "O God, I love You. May I be as the sun that goes forth in its might before You." May this verse also become your aspiration and your daily prayer.

MAKING A GOOD USE OF THE MORNING REVIVAL MATERIALS

[When we enjoy the Lord with the morning revival materials in the morning,] we have to exercise not to rely too much on our mind but on the spirit. Read sentence by sentence. Not only should we read, but we should also turn the word into prayer. We have to exercise our spirit to push out the word and the spirit with Christ. Spirit touches spirit. When we read the Scriptures with the exercise of the spirit, this will touch others' spirit. This will have the impact. We all have to learn to pray in spirit and read the Bible in spirit to push the word out. When the word enters into us, it will

become the spirit which touches our spirit, then we will receive the Christ who is in spirit as the life supply. This is very important.

Reading Repeatedly, Stressfully, Livingly, And Prayerfully

Besides reading repeatedly and stressfully, we also have to read livingly. Concerning this, we will use the previous example of Genesis 1:2, which says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." As we read this verse again and again, we will start to thank God, thanking Him for creating the heavens and the earth, and thanking Him for creating you and me. This kind of reading is living and lively without departing from the subject or the main point. Now we have already seen that we have to read repeatedly, stressfully, and livingly. Lastly, we also have to pray-read.

For us to read the Bible livingly and lively, we cannot lack one of these four things: reading repeatedly, reading stressfully, reading livingly, and reading prayerfully. For example, when we enjoy a certain verse, we may first read it repeatedly, then read it stressfully, livingly, and at the end, read it prayerfully. These four "readings" added together is a kind of reading method. In our pray-reading, we read repeatedly, stressfully, and livingly. These four readings combined together is the best reading method. It does not come from our mind but our experience. (Bearing Remaining Fruit, Vol. 1, Ch. 13)

Only Christ Being the Reality, and Only the Spirit Giving Life

Knowledge is empty, and the letter kills; only Christ is the reality, and only the Spirit can give life. Before we read, we must pray, confess, and allow the Spirit of Christ to fill and saturate us richly. In our reading, we need to exercise not to rely too much on our mind but on our spirit, reject the old way of knowledge and focus on the new way of life, and push out what we read with life by the exercise of our spirit sentence by sentence to touch others' spirit so that they may receive the pneumatic Christ as their life supply. This can be considered as the most crucial.

In fact, the word of God does not require too much of the thinking in our mind, but it requires our spirit touching the Holy Spirit. In this way, we will be enlightened within. Thinking gives us only knowledge, and knowledge is nothing but the letter which is empty and kills. When we exercise our spirit, we will touch life in which is Christ, and only Christ is the reality. (Bearing Remaining Fruit, Vol. 1, Ch. 13)

STUDYING THE INTERPRETED AND OPENED BIBLE TO LEARN THE DIVINE TRUTH

Recently, I was having a time with the Lord in the morning with the help of the publication we have entitled The Holy Word for Morning Revival. I was praying over Ephesians 6:23, which says, "Peace to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." I was asking myself what peace and love with faith meant. I forgot that I had written a note on this verse in the Recovery Version, so I read it. The note points out that faith is to receive Christ (John 1:12) and love is to enjoy Christ (14:23). Then it says, "Here it is not faith and love, nor love and faith, but love with faith, because this is the conclusion of the book on the church, which needs to enjoy Christ in love with faith, which works through love (Gal. 5:6). Love comes from God to us, and faith goes from us to God. By means of this traffic of love and faith, peace remains our portion." (Footnote 2) I received much help from reading this note on Ephesians 6:23. This shows that we need the interpretation and the exposition of the Word. (The World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move, pp. 26-27)

USING THE HYMNS IN A LIVING WAY

…There is a hymn at the end of each lesson. We also have to learn how to use hymns in a living way, not in a set way. For example, there are six stanzas in a hymn. We may not need to sing all the six stanzas, but we may sing only one stanza which is fitting. (Bearing Remaining Fruit, Vol. 1, Ch. 13)

WRITING A PROPHECY

To prophesy is to speak for the Lord and to speak forth the Lord. It is to supply Christ to others. This is the main work in the church meetings. The whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 14 talks about prophesying. It promotes, uplifts, recommends, and encourages prophesying. Verse 1 says, "Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy." In the end, verse 39 says, "Therefore, my brothers, desire earnestly to prophesy." Once you prophesy, you excel (v. 12), and the meeting becomes rich. Verse 31 says, "For you can all prophesy one by one." Everyone can do it. No one is unable to do it. Verse 24 says, "But if all prophesy." This means that all should prophesy in the meetings. As a result, when an unbeliever comes, "he is convicted by all, he is judged by all; the secrets of his heart become manifest; and so falling on his face, he will worship God, reporting that God is really among you" (vv. 24b-25). Prophesying enables all to "learn and all be encouraged" (v. 31). Moreover, to prophesy is to speak to men for building up and encouragement and consolation, that the church may be built up (vv. 3-4). Hence, we all need to learn to prophesy.

In order that everyone can prophesy, there is a practical and simple way, which is to have every saint revived every morning. Every week, divide up a chapter of the Bible into six portions, and read one portion each morning, picking out two verses in it for pray-reading. Then write down the inspiration and response every day. On Saturday evening, pray-read over the inspirations that are written, and compose a paragraph from them for prophesying. Preferably, you should help the brothers and sisters to improve a little on these compositions so that the content will be concise. You should also tell them that these compositions are simply memos. During the district meetings, they should not read from them. Rather they should speak them out as in ordinary speakings. During the speaking, if they have further inspiration, they should add a few words to them. In this way, the saints will pick up the boldness in the meetings and will be able to speak for the Lord. Of course, the most difficult thing to learn in prophesying is to have the spiritual inspiration. If there is no inspiration, it will become mechanical, and the result will not be a prophesying. For this

reason, the prophesying has to be living and organic. Brother Nee once said that if a speaker can never have instant utterance, his message will never be strong. A strong message requires instant utterance. In other words, there is the need for instant inspiration, plus the utterance to express it. Hence, when we speak for the Lord, we have to pay attention to the instant inspiration. With the inspiration, there is also the need for the utterance to express it. (The Organic Practice of the New Way, pp. 16-17)

QUESTIONS

1. Why does the revival of Christians occur in the morning?

2. How do we enjoy the morning nourishment and how do we enjoy the content of the ministry messages?

3. How do we write a prophecy?

LESSON TWENTY-TWO

HOW TO ENTER INTO THE RICHES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY

Scripture Reading:

1 Tim. 2:4 Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth.

1 Tim. 4:6 If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed.

2 Tim. 1:13 Hold a pattern of the healthy words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

Hymn: 542

OUTLINE

I. Setting up a proper schedule of one's daily life.

A. Having a budget in time, energy, and finances.

B. We should set aside some time for the Lord every week and every day.

II. The personal aspect of entering into the proper education of the truth:

A. Building up a habit of spending time in the Word.

1. Spend at least thirty minutes in the Word every day.

2. Pray-read the verses, study the footnotes and the accompanying life-study messages.

B. The need of a solid foundation in the Lord's Word.

C. Growing gradually by life and by the truth:

1. While the issue of nourishment is forever, the nourishment itself only remains temporarily.

2. Once the truth has been constituted into someone, it will remain

forever.

D. Laboring to get into the ministry.

III. The meeting aspect of entering into the proper education of the truth:

A. Our meetings must be living, nourishing, and educating:

1. Our church meetings should be full of the Spirit, full of life, full of prayer, full of a refreshing atmosphere.

2. We must carry out the saints' education according to the basic truths.

B. We must endeavor to make all the church meetings educational centers.

C. Giving the saints the proper education in the full knowledge of the truth.

D. The leading ones, the co-workers and the ones who take care of the meetings need to be prepared for the meetings.

IV. Entering into the riches of the New Testament ministry:

A. The New Testament Recovery Version.

B. Life-Study of the Old Testament and New Testament.

C. The Collected Works of Watchman Nee.

D. All kind of Spiritual Books.

E. Hymns.

F. Messages from the seven annual conferences and trainings.

G. Holy Word For Morning Revival.

H. Various publications:

1. In Chinese: The Stream, Affirmation & Critique, The Jubilee Paper.

2. In English: Ministry Magazine, Stream Magazine, Affirmation & Critique, Generation Paper, etc.

I. Radio broadcasts of messages from the ministry, websites on the internet by the Lord's Recovery, etc.

REFERENCE

Msg. Given to the Working Saints, Ch. 8; Elders' Training, Book 3, Ch. 9 to 13.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

We need to find a way to bring all the saints in the Lord's recovery into a proper education of the truth concerning God's New Testament economy. We need to consider this matter in two aspects—the personal aspect and the meeting aspect. We must have a personal way laid as a foundation for us to stand on and then go on to take care of the meeting way. (Elder's Training, Book 3, p. 106.)

SETTING UP A PROPER SCHEDULE OF ONE'S DAILY LIFE

You need to set up a proper schedule for your life. Formerly, you were not living to the Lord, and your way of living was like that of those in the world. But now you are living to the Lord; you should set up a new pattern of life. Speaking first of the small things of life, most people like to sleep a little late in the morning. This is especially true with the young people. But now, you have to get up at six-thirty in the morning. The first thing after getting up is to call "O Lord Jesus' and to pray. Speaking next of the more important things of life, most people want to seek after an academic degree and to be famous and glamorous in the world. Now that we love the Lord and live for Him, our way of living is changed. In everything we should still fulfill our duties properly. We study properly and work properly, without any special coveting. In an ordinary way, we should love the Lord and live for Him. Formerly, our life was a struggle and a striving for success in the world. Now we live a simple life of loving the Lord, living for Him, raising a family, educating our children, and daily testifying and bringing people to Him. Even when we venture into business, we do so with a restraint. We only labor in a measured way. We would not be greedy, nor would we be lazy. Neither would we waste time. In this way, we will truly be a person

that loves the Lord and lives for Him. Otherwise, even though you may have a strong desire, your outward way of living will eat you up totally and bind you. For this reason, our way of living has to be one that matches our desire to love Him, live for Him, and serve Him. (Messages Given to the Working Saints, pp. 85-86)

THE PERSONAL ASPECT OF ENTERING INTO THE PROPER EDUCTIONOF THE TRUTH

Building up a Habit of Spending Time in the Word

We should help the saints to build up a practice or a habit that every day they would spend at least thirty minutes in the Word. This can be done by taking ten minutes in the morning, ten minutes in the evening, and another ten minutes before going to bed. We all need to build up such a practice to spend at least thirty minutes a day to get into Lord's Word. The best way is to charge the saints to study a book of the New Testament according to their choice. They should get into this book continually and every day. Some saints may decide to study the book of Romans or the book of Hebrews. They should study every day either three times of ten minutes each or one time of thirty minutes. We should charge them to pray-read two or three verses of this book every day. Then they have to study the accompanying message, we have messages on all the verses. The saints do not need to pray-read the Life-Study Messages, but they have to pray-read the biblical verses. In order to get the help to enter into the truth conveyed in these few verses. They also need the help of the notes and the Life-study Messages to enter into the truth. The saints need to take this way every day to get into the truth. After one year of studying the Bible in this way, there will be a solid change in the saints' home life, private life, and church life. A few verses seems very slow but we must realize that breathing is a slow thing. We only breathe a little at a time, but this continual practice accumulates and keeps us living. We may think this is too slow, but even if it took us ten years to finish the entire New Testament that would be wonderful. To pick up the truth contained in half of the New Testament

after five years will be marvelous. We do not encourage the saints to be greedy and attempt to finish one book in one day. Then "their stomach will burst." We should not encourage them in this way. Rather, we should slow them down. It is not a matter of quantity but a matter of endurance. You must endure this kind of Bible study. I think we need to remind them week after week, and sometimes the elders need to give the saints some direction, some encouragement, and some incentive. (Elder's Training, Book 3, pp 108-109)

The Need of a Solid Foundation in the Word

The Lord's recovery in the United States…during this time, all those who left the church and who caused trouble and became a failure never received a solid foundation in the Word. Everyone in the past twenty years who has passed through all kinds of tests and who was not only never shaken but also never affected are a real benefit to the Lord's recovery. Whatever the storm was they remained steadfast and they went on with the Lord and are still here. They have not been a damage or a problem. Everyone like this is one that loves the Word and has a sound foundation n the truth. There is not an exception to this either on the positive side or on the negative side. All those who became a problem never had a solid foundation in the Word.

I have the assurance to say that whoever has read through five hundred Life-study Messages properly has been an excellent believer. You elders who are shepherding the local churches know the real situation of most of the saints. If a saint in your locality is not that "proper' and he would begin from tomorrow morning to read the Life-study Messages until he reaches five-hundred, he will become another person. Medicine, nourishment, and all kinds of vitamins are included in these messages. This is why I said earlier that I had some realization that some of the saints who contacted me had not read many of the Life-study. I realized that they had not taken the "medicine and nourishment." In their talk there were symptoms and signs of sickness. For example, a doctor may prescribe certain drugs for his

patient. When the patient comes back to him after two months, the doctor can tell whether or not the patient took the drugs. The patient's breathing, color, and entire being tells the doctor that the patient did not take the prescription. If you would begin to study the Life-studies every day starting tomorrow morning, you will become a different person even after fifty days. (Elder's Training, Book 3, p. 106)

Growing Gradually by Life and by the Truth

While the issue of nourishment is forever, the nourishment itself only remains temporarily. Once the truth has been constituted into someone, however, it will remain there forever and its remaining is its supply. Our need for the long run is this kind of education with the truth, which is really something solid, living, and existing. We need this. Do not expect to have an overnight success which is like a factory making artificial flowers. Overnight you can produce many flowers, but in a genuine nursery or garden it takes time to grow flowers. Do not pick up a thought that we could do a quick work. You may have the thought that within two years a great number of people will be added to the church. Most of these people, however, may be empty. This is mushrooming. We must take care of the church in a way of growing gradually by life and by truth. (Elder's Training, Book 3, pp 120-121)

THE MEETING ASPECT OF ENTERING INTO THE PROPER EDUCATION OF THE TRUTH

We must find out the best way to carry out the New Testament ministry. In principle, I feel that we, the leaders, must get into the ministry and we must find a way to bring our congregation into it….We must keep our meetings so living and so full of nourishment. But still, we must carry out the saints' education in the basic truths. Then all the saints who have been meeting in the Lord's recovery with us for many years will get the adequate, solid, and basic education of the New Testament economy….Our meeting should be carried out in a living way such that all the saints might

be nourished on the one hand and educated on the other hand. (pp. 98-99)

I am not fellowshipping in a legal way, but in principle I beg the elders to reconsider the way to carry out the meetings. We must have a very available way to carry out God's purpose. We cannot go the religious way. Even today our way of meeting is still very much governed and influenced by the religious way. We come together to pray, read some verses of the Bible, give some messages, and the people who have been sitting in our meetings for years eventually only get some kind of inspiration. This is better than nothing, but for the long run the Lord could not carry out His purpose in this way.

We cannot take the old way of our meeting life. If we continue to take our old way, I am afraid after another ten years we will be in the same condition. We are just giving people a little injection to help them grow in life mainly by inspiration, but no solid truth has been constituted into their being that can remain in their memory and that can be presented to others in a proper doctrinal way. By taking the way we have taken, we have lost the nature of the testimony of Jesus, which must be a constitution of the proper truth that produces a proper daily living. If the saints are not properly constituted with the truth, they cannot live a proper life. If they only live by inspiration and not by the constitution of the truth, I do not trust in that kind of living to be a testimony of the Lord.

I feel that we must endeavor to make all the church meetings educational centers to build the saints up with the proper knowledge. Our meetings should not merely be a restaurant to feed the children or a hospital to heal people. If the parents of a child would not care for the education of their children until they become ten years old, their children would grow up to be persons who are not very useful to society. Proper parents must take care of bringing their children up through elementary, junior high, high school, and college. In like manner, we must educate our spiritual children. We should not only help them grow in life, but also help them to be educated and built up in the proper knowledge of the truth. To carry out this educational work we must come to the Life-study Messages

with the Recovery Version and the notes. If all the saints could go through the entire New Testament and the Life-studies with the Recovery Version and the notes in five years I would worship the Lord, This would be wonderful. (pp. 144 145.)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the personal aspect, how do we enter into the truth?

2. According to the meeting aspect, how do we enter into the truth?

3. Please try and list some examples of the riches of the ministry.

4. Set up a new pattern, a proper schedule for your life, so that you can enter into the riches of the New Testament ministry.

LESSON TWENTY-THREE

HOW TO PRAY-READ, STUDY, RECITE, AND PROPHESY

Scripture Reading:

Acts 8:30 And when Philip ran up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, Do you really know the things that you are reading?

Acts 8:31a And he said, How could I unless someone guides me?...

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God.

Hymn: 802

OUTLINE

I. Four stages of the divine revelation:

A. Men spoke (wrote) from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit—2 Pet. 1:21.

2 Pet. 1:21 For no prophecy was ever borne by the will of man, but men spoke from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit.

B. Translated into many languages.

C. Interpreted—2 Pet. 1:20; Acts 8:31.

2 Pet. 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of one's own interpretation;

Acts 8:31 And he said, How could I unless someone guides me? And he entreated Philip to come up and sit with him.

D. To become the constitution of the saints—Col. 3:16; Deut. 6:4-9.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

Deut. 6:4 Hear, O Israel, Jehovah is our God; Jehovah is one.

Deut. 6:5 And you shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Deut. 6:6 And these words, which I command you today, shall be upon your heart;

Deut. 6:7 And you shall repeat them to your children, and speak about them when you sit in your house and when you journey on the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up;

Deut. 6:8 And you shall bind them on your hand as a sign, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes;

Deut. 6:9 And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

II. The best way for God's word to be constituted into the believers—pray-reading, studying, reciting, and prophesying (PSRP):

A. God's word not only has been written, translated, and interpreted, it also needs to be immediately and universally received, assimilated, and constituted into the saints.

B. The way to practice:

1. Spending the time, continuing steadfastly to practice PSRP.

2. The sequence of PSRP—pray-reading, studying, reciting, and prophesying.

a. Pray-reading:

(1) Pray-reading cannot be done lightly.

(2) Laying a good foundation through pray-reading.

b. Studying:

(1) Having to study the truths word by word, term by term, and phrase by phrase.

(2) Use the New Testament Recovery Version and the Life-study to help us in our studying.

c. Reciting:

(1) Spontaneously, we will be able to recite what we have pray-read and studied.

(2) When contacting people, do not do it in the old way of preaching and teaching but even recite the outlines to them.

d. Prophesying:

(1) After having pray-read, studied, and recited the outlines, we will spontaneously know how to prophesy.

(2) To prophesy is not to give a complete message. Prophesying is based on what we have recited; what we have recited is based on what we have studied; what we have studied is based on what we have pray-read. If we do not pray-read, study, and recite, how can we prophesy?

(3) Throughout the week, you need to PSR, PSR, PSR every day, then on the Lord's Day, you will be able to prophesy.

C. The goal of PSRP:

1. PSRP is the best way. The goal is to enter into the high peak truths, the new language of the new age.

2. PSRP is a procedure. The goal is for the unique truth in the divine revelation—to constitute the universal mingling and incorporation of God and man.

III. Conclusion:

A. PSRP is our new way. From now on, we will be teaching this matter. This way was already in the Bible—Acts 8:30-35.

Acts 8:30 And when Philip ran up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, Do you really know the things that you are reading?

Acts 8:31 And he said, How could I unless someone guides me? And he entreated Philip to come up and sit with him.

Acts 8:32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "As a sheep He was led to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so He does not open His mouth.

Acts 8:33 In His humiliation His judgment was taken away. Who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken away from the earth."

Acts 8:34 And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I beseech you, Concerning whom does the prophet say this? Concerning himself or concerning someone else?

Acts 8:35 And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he announced Jesus as the gospel to him.

B. If a person attending the Lord's Day meeting yet cannot prophesy, this shows that they have been lazy throughout the week not

practicing PSRP. If they have practiced, they must have something to prophesy.

C. The Lord's recovery is different from the denominations because we practice PSRP but they do not, therefore, they need persons educated in theology to speak to them. In the Lord's recovery, we are training everyone to PSRP.

D. How do the elders contact people and how to lead the church forward? The way is PSRP. Everyone can prophesy.

E. We need to change our old concept which belongs to Christianity and turn to PSRP. Escape the old way and enter into the new way of prophesying.

REFERENCE

The Vital Groups, Chs. 13, 15-16.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

PRACTICING PRAY-READING, STUDYING, RECITING, AND PROPHESYING

In order to get into the details of the outlines we have released on Christ in His three stages, I would like to recommend the practice of the saints in Taipei. They come together in small groups to pray-read the outline. After pray-reading they study it. Then they learn to recite the entire outline, word by word. Then they prophesy. We may feel that we cannot do this, but if there is a will, there is a way. This practice of pray-reading, studying, reciting, and prophesying has become the best way for the saints in Taipei to digest all these new outlines. After they practice this, they are fully nourished, and they can go to nourish others.

The content of one outline concerning Christ in one of His stages is like ten meals. We should nourish people with a meal. Each member of the vital groups should present a meal to people for their nourishment. It is hard to see a group among us today which is really vital. Our groups are not vital

because we are not nourished. If we want to enter into the intrinsic significance of the Bible, we need to digest these outlines we have released to enable us to nourish others with the unsearchable riches of Christ in His full ministry in three stages. (The Vital Groups, p. 125)

In today's Christianity, there are many different teachings, but we should have only one teaching, the New Testament teaching, which is called the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). The unique teaching in the New Testament is the teaching of the apostles concerning God's eternal economy to produce the church for the Body that consummates the New Jerusalem. When we pursue Christ and build up the church according to the apostles' teaching, the New Testament ministry, we will be under the Lord's blessing. We may say that it is difficult to gain Caucasians, but in the place mentioned above, at least half of the saints have faithfully practiced door-knocking for the past ten years, and the new ones they have gained have been mostly Caucasians. The contents of the above testimony are according to what I have been teaching for the past ten years. This testimony confirms that the God-ordained way to practice and build up the church life according to the New Testament ministry really works. (p. 138)

Pray-reading

The Bible was first written, then translated, and finally interpreted and explained. According to our old way, many of us have been listening to messages interpreting the Bible for years, but when we go to contact people, we still do not know what to say. This is why I have shared that we need to follow the pattern of the saints in Taiwan to practice PSRP—pray-reading, studying, reciting, and prophesying. All of this requires time. Pray-reading cannot be done lightly. Then we need to study the truths word by word, term by term, and phrase by phrase. For instance, John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then verse 14 says that the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and reality. Many read these verses without understanding them. This is why we need the word to be

interpreted to us.

Studying

Our study equips us to interpret the Word to others. By my study of the Word throughout the years, I saw that grace is God gained and enjoyed by us and reality is God realized by us. We have to gain Him, receive Him, and enjoy Him as grace. Then we have to realize Him as the reality. Although points like this have been made clear in our Life-study of the Bible, we may not pay attention to them to study them. In order to be constituted with the truth, we need to pray-read and then study. Pray-reading verses such as John 1:1 and 14 lays a good foundation. Then we can study the crucial points of these verses with the help of the life-studies. With this help we can find out what grace and reality are. We have to study the truths word by word, term by term, and phrase by phrase. Spontaneously, we will be able to recite what we have pray-read and studied. In addition to our personal study, we also need to study with others. This kind of study cannot be carried out in big meetings. It can be carried out mutually in vital group meetings of six to not more than ten saints. (The Vital Groups, p. 142)

Reciting

We have inherited much from the foregoing interpretations of the Word and have had a life-study of the entire Bible. Then the Lord has taken us further to have a crystallization-study. In this study I have to spend time not merely to present messages as I did with the life-study, but to present outlines. (The Vital Groups, p. 142)….If we are equipped to recite the outlines, we will spontaneously know how to prophesy. The second point of Outline One of the 1996 Thanksgiving conference says, “His [Christ’s] humanity through His incarnation became a shell to conceal the glory of His divinity.” In the beginning was the Word, who is God, this Word became flesh, and this flesh was a shell to conceal the glory of Christ’s divinity. This is why the first banner of the conference says, “The glory of Christ’s

divinity was concealed in Him as in a grain of wheat." The shell of the grain of wheat conceals the grain's life and riches. If we prophesy with points like these, those whom we contact will want to hear what we say. This new way of pray-reading, studying, reciting, and prophesying—PSRP—has been passed on to many places. What I am speaking here is a kind of instruction to all the churches. My new way is PSRP. This is the way for us to cook and to eat the riches which have been released in these recent years.

Prophesying

We should prophesy with what we can recite; what we can recite is what we have studied; and what we have studied is what we have pray-read. If we do not pray-read, study, or recite, we cannot prophesy. I have to encouraged people to prophesy in the Lord's Day meeting, but they still claim that they do not know what to say. Now we have a new way. If we pray-read, study, and recite the points of the outlines released in our crystallization-study of the Word, we will surely prophesy. Who cannot prophesy? Those who do not pray-read the outline, who do not study the outline, and who do not recite the outline. If we practice PSR (pray-reading, studying, and reciting) each day, from Monday through Saturday, we will surely prophesy in the Lord's Day meeting of the church.

I studied Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. Verses 32 through 35 say, "Now the passage of Scripture which he [the eunuch] was reading was this: 'As a sheep He was led to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so He does not open His mouth. In His humiliation His judgment was taken away. Who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken away from the earth.' And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I beseech you, Concerning whom does the prophet say this? Concerning himself or concerning someone else? And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he announced Jesus as the gospel to him." This was Philip's preaching of the gospel.

This account in Acts 8 shows that the practice of PSRP is not our new way. It was in the Bible already, in Acts 8. The way Philip answered the

eunuch and preached Christ to him as the gospel surely indicates that Philip had studied that portion of Isaiah 53, which the eunuch quoted to him, and that he had remembered that portion so that he could preach Christ as the gospel as a kind of prophesying. If he were not familiar with that portion of the holy Word, how could he have preached Christ as the gospel according to that portion? His preaching was a real prophesying of the holy Word with which he had become familiar. (pp. 142-144)

If anyone comes to the Lord's Day morning meeting without being prepared to prophesy, this indicates he was lazy for the whole week. Throughout the week, he did not pray-read, study, or recite. If he had practiced this, he would be able to prophesy on the Lord's Day. After reading the fellowship in this message, we may feel that the standard in the church is too high. In a sense, this is true because we are in the Lord's recovery. We do not want to remain in degraded Christianity. Those in Catholicism are required only to attend mass. They do not have to function. Those in Protestantism mostly listen to sermons. They are not required to speak for the Lord in their meetings. The Lord's recovery is different.

All of the members of Christ's Body should be functioning members who speak for the Lord. This is why we need to practice PSRP. We have to pray-read, study, and recite the points we have studied. Then spontaneously our pray-reading, studying, and reciting will become our prophesying. (The Vital Groups, pp. 143-144)

QUESTIONS

1. What are the four stages of the divine revelation?

2. What is the best way to be constituted with God's word?

3. What is the goal of PSRP?

4. Invite one saint into whom you can dispense the burden and practice of PSRP and then practice PSRP together with that saint.

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR

CONCERNING THE USE OF REFERENCE BOOKS AND OTHER WRITINGS

Hymn: 380

OUTLINE

I. If we help the believers in the Lord's recovery by using other Christian writings, we run two risks.

A. We unintentionally bring the Lord's recovery back to the old books.

B. We run the risk of bringing the recovery backward and not onward.

II. The need of a basic knowledge of the Biblical truths.

A. Young people should learn the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek.

B. Spend five years to study all the publications the Lord's recovery has ever put out.

C. Spend two hours every day to finish this course of the Life-Study Messages with the Recovery Version, including the footnotes and the cross references.

D. Receive help by using the lexicons, the dictionaries of languages, and the concordances of the Bible in the way of comparison.

III. The need of proper discernment.

A. This does not mean that we do not have the liberty to read the old books.

B. The advice is to finish the course of the Life-Study Messages and the Recovery Version with the footnotes to get a strong footing and a proper foundation.

C. This foundation will give you the best discernment.

IV. Conducting the saints to the right way.

REFERENCE

Elders' Training, Book 4, Chs. 1-2; Watchman Nee—A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, Ch. 4.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

TWO RISKS

Unintentionally Bringing the Lord's Recovery back to the Old Books

If we help the believers in the Lord's recovery by using these books, we run two risks. First, we unintentionally bring the Lord's recovery back to the old books which the Lord's recovery has gone through already. From Brother Nee through our sixty year history, we have gone through those books. I do not mean that starting from brother Nee we have read through all the books. This is impossible. However, mainly through Brother Nee's work of looking through thousands of spiritual books and expositions, the Lord's recovery has gone through all those old writings. Brother Nee also had much fellowship with me concerning the things he researched, and I learned much. I really appreciate Brother Nee. In my whole Christian life, I have never met one who had his degree of spiritual discernment. He was the top selector. Among the many books he looked into, he was able to make a quick selection of the books which were useful. This is why I say the Lord's recovery has gone through all those old writings as a collective unit. Although I did not study in a Bible institute or a theological school, I am able to give you an analysis of the so-called theology in today's Christianity. Many of these old writings are very good, but some of them are not good and are misleading, distracting, holding back, and some even destroy the faith. (Elders' Training, Book 4, p. 10)

Running the Risk of Bringing the Recovery Backward

Second, we run the risk of bringing the recovery backward and not onward. Since we began to go through these books, the Lord began to show us something further. History tells us that the Lord's recovery did not begin from Luther. Actually the Lord's recovery began from the fourteenth century. Since that time, the Lord's recovery of the truth has been continuing all the time. It did not stop at Luther and it has not stopped with anyone. The problem is, though, that the followers of certain faithful brothers received the light, yet they all stopped with what they received. The followers of Luther stopped at the Lutheran faith, and the followers of John Wesley stopped at the Methodist faith. Even the followers of the Brethren stopped with Darby, but the Lord would not stop and He was never stopped. He kept going on and on. Brother Nee told me during his time that in both Europe and America the Lord had no way to go on. The Lord was forced to go to China, "a heathen land." Brother Nee considered that in that time as far as the Lord's recovery was concerned, China was a piece of "virgin soil." He told me the Lord was forced to come to virgin soil to carry on His recovery. I have no doubt about this because when I was with Brother Nee I did see something new. What I had seen was not something new in the Bible, but something new in discovery and something new in recovery of the already existing items in the Bible. Even within the past twenty-two years in the United States there have been quite a number of crucial recoveries and discoveries of the biblical truths. The Lord's recovery is something going on. It is not something going back. (Elders' Training, Book 4, pp. 10-11)

THE NEED OF A BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLICAL TRUTHS

I also strongly indicated that we should charge our young people to learn the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek. If possible, they should also learn the theological language of Latin. I did this because I fully realize that for the long run the Lord's recovery needs the basic knowledge of the

biblical truths. To acquire such a basic knowledge in a full and complete way, our young people need to learn Hebrew to study the Old Testament, Greek to study the New Testament, and the Latin to study the earliest theological writings. My encouragement to study these languages was somewhat misunderstood. Also, some others thought that I wanted them to go back to the old books, so they began to collect them.

Two young people came to me who were quite stirred up to study these old books. They asked me to give them a list of all the reference books and expositions for them to study. I immediately told them that I would not give them such a list. I advised them to do their best firstly to learn Greek and if possible Hebrew. I did not include Latin because Latin is not that important. I also told them that if they mean business with the Lord and His truth they must spend five years to study all the publications the Lord's recovery has ever put out. I told them that they had to spend two hours every day to finish this course of the Life-study Messages with the Recovery Version, including the footnotes and the cross references. Finally, I advised them to come to me after they had finished their course and then I would give them a good list of reference books. I said this because at that time they will have been educated and built up with a strong footing of the truth. Then they will have the best discernment. They will be able to look into books and immediately discern whether they are a help or a hindrance. (pp. 12-13)

I passed through this stage of picking up wrong interpretations and concepts of the Scriptures, so I learned something. I do not like to see that the Lord's recovery is being brought backward to the old writings. I also do not like to see that the young generation would be brought back to the old things to occupy them. We must realize that we only have one life to live. Even with two or three lives, you cannot exhaust the reading of the Christian books. I do not like to see people misdirected in reading things that will waste their time.

By the Lord's mercy, there has been a kind of laboratory work done through Brother Nee and us. We have picked up the necessary, basic items

of the divine, spiritual, and heavenly things. We have put all these things, not in a scholarly form, but in a "layman's form" which is John's form in the book of John.

My burden is that we must take good care of the young ones among us. Do not bring them into peril so that they would be occupied with the wrong things. We have a pure system of publications which comprises all the main things of the divine, spiritual, and heavenly things. These publications are very adequate for all the young saints among us to have a good foundation laid and a strong standing established. Then they could go on, not to learn more things from the old books, but to check the old books and to get themselves confirmed.

For us to bring the young ones into the old books without consideration is a peril and a risk. It is not safe. What you young ones can use as reference books, however, are the dictionaries, lexicons, and concordances. Nearly all the dictionaries have some good points. No dictionary, however, is complete and all differ from one another. Never be satisfied with one. You must use more than one. When you investigate a word, do not be satisfied with one dictionary's definition. You must look into others. These are the only things which I would recommend for you young ones to use—the lexicons, the dictionaries of languages, and the concordances of the Bible. You should use these references in the way of comparison. This will help you. (pp. 11, 15-16)

ACQUIRING A PROPER FOUNDATION

We have seen that we should not bring in any distractions or frustrations to the Lord's ministry. I do not mean that we do not have the liberty to read the old books. We should not exercise any control over the saints. This is absolutely wrong. Please do not think that in my fellowship concerning the way to use the reference books and other writings I intended to control the saints from reading others' writings. This is absolutely wrong. You are free to go to any books, but if you go to the books I would say you run a risk, and you will probably waste your time. If

you ask for my advice, I would say that you had better not go to others' books until you have finished the course of the Life-study Messages and the Recovery Version with the footnotes to get a strong footing and a proper foundation which gives you the best discernment. Then it is safe for you to go into other books. (Elders' Training, Book 4, p. 21)

CONDUCTING THE SAINTS TO THE RIGHT WAY

We do not need to control the saints, and even more we do not need to stop them from reading what they want. As leaders in the Lord's recovery, however, we should conduct the saints to the right way. We do not need to tell them not to go a certain way, but we must tell them to take the right way. We are here for the Lord's recovery. The publications which can help and serve the Lord's recovery in carrying out His New Testament economy for the fulfillment of His heart's desire, I still would say, are the Life-studies, and the Recovery Version with the notes. Since this is the case, why would we not wisely conduct the church toward this way? For example, if someone asks us the best way to drive to Phoenix, we should conduct him to the straightest way.

We are not here merely for the individual Christian life, a mission work to the foreign field, or bearing the Lord's name to the heathen countries. These are all good things but this is not our commission. Our commission is to let the Lord carry out His New Testament economy by His New Testament ministry. This is why I feel very sorry that in certain places the leadership was not that strong or adequate. If the leadership in that part of the world had been strong and adequate, it would have conducted all the saints in every church to the right way. We should not waste time, we should not delay people, and we should not let confusions come in. We should not fail the Lord in His New Testament economy. (p. 26)

QUESTIONS

1. What are the risks in using other Christian writings to help the believers in the Lord's recovery?

2. How should the young people acquire a basic knowledge of the Biblical truths?

3. How does one receive the proper spiritual discernment?

SERIES III

THE CONTENT OF GOD'S NEW TESTAMENT ECONOMY

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LESSON ONE

GOD'S ECONOMY

Scripture Reading:

1 Tim. 1:4b …God's economy, which is in faith.

Eph. 1:10a Unto the economy of the fullness of the times…

Eph. 3:9-11 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Hymn: 1334

OUTLINE

I. Definition of the word economy:

A. In Greek the word economy is composed of two words, oikos (household, abode, dwelling place) and nomos (law), Oikonomia denotes household regulations or household management.

B. This word refers to a household administration and management, it implies a plan.

II. The economy of God:

A. God's household management, God's household administrative arrangement, the divine dispensation—Eph.1: 10.

Eph. 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.

B. A plan made by God according to His good pleasure—Eph.1:9.

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself.

C. An eternal plan God made in Christ—Eph.3:11.

Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our

Lord,

D. To dispense God Himself into His chosen people in His Trinity. This dispensing has three steps:

1. It is of God the Father, who is the source, the origin—Eph.1:3-6.

Eph. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ,

Eph. 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,

Eph. 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph. 1:6 To the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved.

2. This dispensing is through God the Son, who is the course—Eph. 1:7-12.

Eph. 1:7 In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace,

Eph. 1:8 Which He caused to abound to us in all wisdom and prudence,

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph. 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph. 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

Eph. 1:12 That we would be to the praise of His glory who have first hoped in Christ.

3. God's dispensing is in God the Spirit, who is the instrument and sphere—Eph. 1:13-14.

Eph. 1:13 In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise,

Eph. 1:14 Who is the pledge of our inheritance unto the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory.

E. For the producing of the church as the kingdom of God, consummating in the New Jerusalem—Eph.3:10; 1Cor. 4:17, 20; Rev.21:2; John 3:29.

Eph. 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the

multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church.

1 Cor. 4:17 Because of this I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Cor. 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not in speech but in power.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

John 3:29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

III. The main emphasis of the Bible is concerning the economy of God; "God became man, that man may become God" is the essence of the entire Bible—1 John 3:2.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is.

A. God became man—incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

B. Man becoming God—going through regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation and glorification.

C. The New Jerusalem is the ultimate consummation of God's economy—Eph. 5:31-32; Rev. 21:2, 9-10; 22:17.

Eph. 5:31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.

Eph. 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

Rev. 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

Rev. 22:17 And 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.

IV. The economy of God is likened to a great wheel with Christ as the

center—Ezek.1:15-21:

Ezek. 1:15 And as I watched the living creatures, I saw a wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, for each of their four faces.

Ezek. 1:16 The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship were like the sight of beryl. And the four of them had one likeness; that is, their appearance and their workmanship were as it were a wheel within a wheel.

Ezek. 1:17 Whenever they went, they went in their four directions; they did not turn as they went.

Ezek. 1:18 As for their rims, they were high and they were awesome; and the rims of the four of them were full of eyes all around.

Ezek. 1:19 And whenever the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and whenever the living creatures were lifted up above the earth, the wheels were lifted up also.

Ezek. 1:20 Wherever the Spirit was to go, they went—wherever the Spirit was to go. And the wheels were lifted up alongside them, for the Spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

Ezek. 1:21 Whenever those went, these went; and whenever those stood still, these stood still; and whenever those were lifted up above the earth, the wheels were lifted up alongside them; for the Spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

A. The hub of the wheel signifies Christ as the center of God's economy.

B. The rim signifies Christ's counterpart, the church, the Body of Christ.

C. The many believers as the members of Christ are the spokes spreading from the hub to the rim, spreading to the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem.

D. The great wheel is not just the economy of God but also the moving of the economy of God:

1. From Genesis chapter one until now, the move of God's economy has never stopped, and today this great wheel has reached us.

2. In every age and in every generation, this great wheel has been moving and today we all are a part of the move of this great wheel on earth.

REFERENCE

The Economy of God and the Mystery of the Transmission of the Divine Trinity, Msg. 2; The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 1, Msg. 2; Living a Life according to the High Peak of God's Revelation, Ch. 5; The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ, Ch. 2; The Life-study of Joshua, Msg. 2.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD "ECONOMY"

The Greek word for economy is composed of two words. The first word oikos means "house" or "home," denoting a household or a dwelling place; the second word nomos means "law." When these two words are combined together, it means "household law," and it may be explained further to mean "household administration." Hence, the word economy means "household law," "household management," or "household administration." Since it is a household administration, it implies an arrangement or a plan. Since the household administration is to enforce the household rules, naturally it has an arrangement with a plan. Since it is an arrangement or a plan, there must be a purpose. (The Economy of God and the Mystery of the Transmission of the Divine Trinity, p. 20)

GOD'S NEW TESTAMENT ECONOMY

God's Household Management, God's Household Administrative Arrangement, The Divine Dispensation

God's New Testament economy is God's household management, God's household administrative arrangement, the divine dispensation (plan). By dispensation we mean here an arrangement, that is, a plan.

This economy, this dispensation, is revealed in Ephesians 1:10 and 3:9. Ephesians 1:10 says, "Unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the

earth, in Him." The Greek word rendered "dispensation" here is oikonomia, from which we get the English word "economy." … The Greek word rendered "dispensation" in Ephesians 1:10 can also be translated "stewardship" or "household arrangement". The word "administration" may also be used because eventually this dispensation, this stewardship and household arrangement, will become an eternal administration. The entire universe will eventually be under one administration.

Then in 3:2 he speaks of the stewardship of the grace of God, and in 3:9, of the dispensation of the mystery. In 3:9 Paul says, "To bring to light what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things". God's mystery is His hidden purpose. His purpose is to dispense Himself into His chosen people. Hence, there is the dispensation 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.

In 1 Timothy 1:4 Paul speaks of "God's dispensation which is in faith". Once again, the Greek word rendered "dispensation" is oikonomia. In Greek the words "God's dispensation" here also mean God's household economy. This is God's household administration to dispense Himself in Christ into His chosen people so that He may have a house, a household, to express Himself, which household is the church, the Body of Christ. Paul's ministry was centered on this economy of God (Col. 1:25; 1Cor. 9:17).

A Plan Made By God According To His Good Pleasure

God's economy is a plan made by God according to His good pleasure. …Ephesians 1:9 says, "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself." God's good pleasure is the desire of His heart. This good pleasure was what God purposed in Himself for a dispensation, for a plan (v.10)….This means that God Himself is the initiation, origination, and sphere of His eternal purpose. God has a plan, a desire, and according to His plan, He has a purpose….God's good pleasure is to dispense Himself into us. This is the

unique desire of God. We may say that God is "dreaming" of dispensing Himself into us. His longing, His aspiration, is to dispense Himself into His chosen people.

An Eternal Plan God Made In Christ

God's economy is an eternal plan made by God in Christ. …Ephesians 3:11 says, "According to the purpose of the ages which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord." The purpose of the ages is the purpose of eternity, the eternal purpose, the eternal plan of God made in eternity past.

God made His eternal economy in Christ. The Christ revealed in the Bible is the embodiment of the Triune God and all the processes through which He has passed, including incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and descension. In such Christ God made His eternal economy….Christ is everything in God's economy. In fact, all the contents of the eternal economy of God are simply Christ. Christ is the center, circumference, element, sphere, means, goal, and aim of this economy.

To Dispense God Himself into His Chosen People in His Trinity

In what way does God dispense Himself into His people in His trinity? This dispensing has three steps. First, it is of God the Father. The Father is the source, the origin. Second, this dispensing is through God the Son, who is the course. Third, God's dispensing is in God the Spirit, who is the instrument and sphere. Through these steps of God the Father, through God the Son, and in God the Spirit God dispenses Himself into His chosen people.

For the Producing of the Church as the Kingdom of God, Consummating in the New Jerusalem

God's New Testament economy to dispense Himself into His chosen people is for the producing of the church (Eph. 3:10). This dispensing

brings forth the church for the manifestation of the multifarious wisdom of God according to His eternal purpose made in Christ (Eph. 3:9-11). This means that through the dispensing of God in His trinity the church is produced to exhibit God's manifold wisdom.

1 Corinthians 4:17 and 20 show that the kingdom is the church life today. In verse 17 Paul refers to his ways "which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church". Then in verse 20 he says, "The kingdom of God is not in speech, but in power". These verses show that the kingdom of God is the church everywhere, and the church everywhere is the kingdom.

The church as the kingdom of God will have a consummation, and this consummation will be the New Jerusalem for the eternal expression of the Triune God. Revelation 21:2 says, "I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband". The New Jerusalem is a living composition of all the saints redeemed by God throughout all generations. It is the bride of Christ as His counterpart (John 3:29) and the holy city of God as His habitation, God's tabernacle (Rev. 21:3). As the bride of Christ, New Jerusalem comes out of Christ, "her Husband", and becomes His counterpart, just as Eve came out of Adam, her husband, and became his counterpart (Gen. 2:21-24). The New Jerusalem is prepared as a bride for her husband by participating in the riches of the life and nature of Christ. As the holy city of God, she is wholly sanctified unto God and fully saturated with God's holy nature to be His habitation. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 1, pp. 14-18)

"GOD BECAME MAN, THAT MAN MAY BECOME GOD" BEING THE ESSENCE OF THE ENTIRE BIBLE

Today we have come to this high peak of God's divine revelation. I would even say that we have probably reached the highest peak of the divine revelation in the entire Bible. "God became man that man may become God" is the essence of the entire Bible. The entire Bible is an explanation of the eternal economy of God. (Living a Life According to the High Peak of God's Revelation, pp. 37-38)

The words “God becoming man and man becoming God” sound very simple, but to be able to see how God could become man requires us to spend much time to study. He came to become man that man may become Him, but how can man become God? We also need to look into his point carefully. Strictly speaking, these words are the essence of the entire Bible. The entire Bible is an explanation of the eternal economy of God. Up to the present time it has been thirty-five hundred years since the Hews began to read the Old Testament; Christians have been reading the Old and New Testament for nearly two thousand years. Millions of people have read the Bible. However, unfortunately, not many have truly seen the proper significance and real meaning in the Bible. This does not mean that throughout the generations no one has seen the visions in the Bible; but what people saw is fragmented. (The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ, pp. 19-20)

God became man through incarnation; man becomes God through transformation. …Our transformation into God, however, is not something that happens unexpectedly. Rather, it is a lifetime transformation until we are conformed to His image. Eventually, we will enter with Him into glory; that is, we will be redeemed in our body. That will be the final step of the redemption of our whole being that brings us into glory. Therefore, it is through regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification that we may become God.

The issue of this process is an organism. This organism is God joining and mingling Himself with man to make God man and also to make man god. Among the Divine Trinity, as far as the Father is concerned, this organism is the house of the Father, the house of God; as far as the Son is concerned, it is the Body of Christ. The house is of God to have a dwelling place, whereas the body is for God to have an expression. The ultimate issue is the New Jerusalem. (p. 31)

THE ECONOMY OF GOD BEING LIKEN TO A GREAT WHEEL

WITH CHRIST AS THE CENTER

In Ezekiel 1 God's economy is likened to a great wheel (vv. 15-21). The hub of this great wheel signifies Christ as the center of God's economy, and the rim signifies Christ's counterpart, the church, which consummates in the New Jerusalem. The many believers as the members of Christ are the spokes of the hub spreading to the rim, to the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem. This great wheel is not just the economy of God but also the moving of the economy of God. From Genesis 1 until the present, this wheel has been continually moving. The move of God's economy has never stopped, and today this great wheel has reached us. When I moved from mainland China to the island of Taiwan with about three hundred fifty to five hundred others [in 1949], there were few Christians on that island who knew what God's economy was. But because of the moving of the great wheel of the divine economy, within five years the number in the churches increased to fifty thousand. Eventually, the Lord, the Motivator, burdened me to come to this country. This also was part of the moving of this great wheel. In every age and in every generation, this great wheel has been moving, and today we all are a part of the move of this great wheel on earth. Sometimes the move of this wheel is quite slow, but at other times it is so fast that we can hardly keep up with it. (Life-Study of Joshua, pp. 7-8)

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the meaning of the word "economy".

2. According to the Bible, explain what is God's economy?

3. Explain briefly what is the essence of the entire Bible.

4. Describe briefly how God's economy is likened to a great wheel with Christ as the center.

LESSON TWO

THE DIVINE DISPENSING

Scripture Reading:

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

1 Cor. 15:45b …the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Eph. 1:22-23 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Hymn: 501

OUTLINE

I. God's dispensing being for God's economy:

A. To dispense God Himself to men:

1. The first step: becoming flesh—John 1:14.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

2. The second step: becoming the life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b.

1 Cor. 15:45b …The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

B. Regenerating, transforming and glorifying the believers—John 3:6; Rom. 12:2, 8:17.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

Rom. 8:17 And if children, heirs also; on the one hand, heirs of God; on the other, joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him.

II. The Divine dispensing in Ephesians chapter one:

A. The Father's choosing and predestination—Eph. 1:4-5.

Eph. 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,

Eph. 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

B. The Son's redemption—Eph. 1:7.

Eph. 1:7 In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace.

C. The Spirit's sealing and pledging—Eph. 1:13-14.

Eph. 1:13 In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise,

Eph. 1:14 Who is the pledge of our inheritance unto the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory.

III. The accomplishment of the divine dispensing of the divine Trinity:

A. The Triune God becoming the flesh, dispensing Himself as grace and reality to man—John 1:1, 14a, 16.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14a And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and reality.

John 1:16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

B. The Triune God dispensing the Son as eternal life to His believers—John 3:16.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.

C. The Son dying to release the divine life and to dispense it to all the members of His Body—John 12:24.

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.

D. The Son resurrecting to be transfigured as the Spirit to be the ultimate consummation of the Triune God, that the Triune God

may be dispensed into the believers—John 20:8-9, 19, 22.

John 20:8 At that time therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, entered, and he saw and believed;

John 20:9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He had to rise from among the dead.

John 20:19 When therefore it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and while the doors were shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them, Peace be to you.

John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

E. The Son being above all, inheriting all, and being sent from God to speak God's word, and dispensing the Spirit without measure—John 3:31-36.

John 3:31 He who comes from above is above all; he who is from the earth is of the earth and speaks out of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.

John 3:32 What He has seen and heard, of this He testifies, and no one receives His testimony.

John 3:33 He who receives His testimony has sealed that God is true.

John 3:34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for He gives the Spirit not by measure.

John 3:35 The Father loves the Son and has given all into His hand.

John 3:36 He who believes into the Son has eternal life; but he who disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him.

IV. The believer's experience of the dispensing of the Divine Trinity:

A. The law of the Spirit of life—The dispensing of the Divine Trinity becoming the Law of the Spirit of Life in the believers—Rom. 8:2.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

B. The Spirit—Making our spirit life because of the regeneration in our spirit—Rom. 8:10.

Rom. 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

C. The soul—Making the mind in our soul life by our setting of our mind on the spirit—Rom. 8:6.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

D. The body—Giving life to our mortal body though our putting to death the practices of the body by the indwelling Spirit—Rom.8:11.

Rom. 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

V. The divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity producing the church as the Body of Christ—Eph. 1:23:

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

A. To be the Body of Christ—Eph. 1:23a.

B. To be the fullness of the One who fills all in all—Eph. 1:23b.

REFERENCE

The Economy and Dispensing of God, Msg. 2-3; A Deeper Study of the Divine Dispensing, Msg. 1, 4, 11.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

GOD'S DISPENSING BEING FOR GOD'S ECONOMY

God Dispensing Himself to Men

In order to dispense Himself to man, the first step God took was to become flesh and be a man (John 1:14). When He was in the flesh, on the one hand, He was the Lamb of God who took away man's sin (John 1:29). On the other hand, He was the brass serpent, which shows that He became flesh, that is, He was sent in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3). As the brass serpent, He had only the form of a serpent; He did not have a serpent's poison. While the Lord was in the flesh, He was lifted up on the cross and destroyed Satan, the old serpent (John 3:14; 12:31). Furthermore, He was also a grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died. Through His

death He released God's life (John 12:24).

The second step God took in order to dispense Himself to man was to become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). These two steps contain two "becomes." The Lord first became flesh, and then He became the life-giving Spirit. His becoming flesh was for the accomplishing of redemption and the releasing of God's life. His becoming the life-giving Spirit was for the dispensing of Himself as the Spirit into man to be man's life. Christ became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45). As such a Spirit He is prepared to be received by those who believe in Him. As soon as we believe into Him, the Spirit of life in resurrection enters into our spirit (Rom. 8:16) and abides in our spirit (Rom. 8:11).

Regenerating, Transforming, and Glorifying the Believers

As the life-giving Spirit, Christ first regenerated our spirit (John 3:5-6) so that, in addition to our natural life, we might receive the eternal life of God as the new source and the new element of the new man. After this, Christ as the life-giving Spirit spreads out from our spirit to transform our soul. If we set our mind, the main part of our soul, on the spirit and cooperate with the operation and work of the Lord Spirit within us, our mind will be renewed (Rom. 12:2). When our mind is renewed, our will and our emotion as the other parts of our soul will spontaneously be renewed also. In this way God's life and nature will be added into us, and we will be metabolically transformed into His image to express Him (2 Cor. 3:17-18).

Finally, He will transfigure our bodies so that our bodies may be redeemed to enter into His glory, and our entire being may be like Him in every way (Rom. 8:17, 23; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2). This is the ultimate consummation of God's salvation. In His salvation, God first regenerated our spirit. Now He is transforming our soul. In the end, He will transfigure our bodies, so that our three parts will be saturated with the Spirit and will be like Christ in every way. All these steps are part of the divine dispensing in us. (The Economy and Dispensing of God, pp. 21-22)

THE DIVINE DISPENSING IN EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

The Father's Choosing and Predestination

We must have a bird's-eye view and a general understanding of God's dispensing. Ephesians chapter one can be divided into three sections. These sections speak of the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity in the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Verses 1-6 speak of the Father's choosing and predestination. Before the foundation of the world, God the Father chose us (v. 4). This is something happened in eternity past. According to God's counsel and foreknowledge, He chose us before the foundation of the world.

God's choosing was not accomplished in time, but in eternity past. Before the foundation of the world, God chose us. Among millions of people, and even before we were born, God saw us and chose us. This is God's predestination. This means that we were marked out ahead of time. God marked us out beforehand and ordained us to receive the sonship (v. 5) that we may not only have life to become the sons of God, but also may have the position to inherit everything of God.

The Son's Redemption

Verses 7-12 (Eph. 1) speak of the Son's redemption. Although God loves us and chose and predestinated us to be the objects of His grace, we became fallen soon after we were created. Because of this we needed redemption, which was accomplished for us by God in Christ through His blood (v. 7).

The redemption of the Son is through the blood that He shed for our sins on the cross (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Because the all-inclusive death of the Son on the cross has satisfied God's righteous requirement, His blood has become the means for our redemption.

The Spirit's Sealing and Pledging

Ephesians 1:13-23 speaks of the sealing and pledging of the Spirit. The Father is the source, the Son is the expression, and the Spirit is the reaching forth. The Father as the source chose and predestinated us in eternity

according to His plan. The Son as the expression accomplished redemption in time according to the Father's plan, and the Spirit as the reaching forth becomes our seal and pledge to apply what the Son has accomplished of the Father's plan.

Today we have heard the word of the truth, which is the gospel of our salvation, and have believed into Christ and have been sealed in Him by the promised Spirit (v. 13). Once we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, the seal will never fade away and will never be lost. But the sealing of the Spirit, which is the anointing of the Spirit in us, is not something that happens once for all. On the contrary, the sealing work is going on continually. The seal was put into us at the time we believed, but the sealing has continued from that time until now. It will continue until the day of the redemption of our bodies (v. 14). The Holy Spirit is the seal, and He is also sealing. He continues to do the work of sealing in us.

This sealing will spread from our spirit to our mind, emotion, and will. We have to admit that our soul has not been fully saturated. Even if our soul is saturated, our body has not been sealed. We need to be sealed continually, until our whole being is saturated. We are like a piece of paper or a cotton ball. When we received the seal of the Spirit, this piece of paper or cotton ball began to be saturated and permeated. Today, the sealing Spirit as the seal is sealing everything of the all-inclusive Christ, all that He has attained and obtained, into us (vv. 19-22). The result is that we all become one. This is the church, the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (vv. 22b-23). (pp. 26-27)

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE DIVINE DISPENSING OF THE DIVINE TRINITY

The Triune God Becoming the Flesh, Dispensing Himself as Grace and Reality to Man

Before the Triune God became flesh, the divine dispensing was not yet realized. It was not until four thousand years after creation that Christ was

born to be a man. This was the first step of God's dispensing into man. John 1 shows us that the Word who was God from the beginning became flesh and came among men, full of grace and reality (John 1:1, 14). For the Word to become flesh was for the Triune God to become a man of flesh. In this way, God entered into the sinful man and was joined as one with the sinful man. But He had only the form of the sinful man; He did not have the sin of the sinful man. This can be seen from the type of the brass serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness (John 3:14). In this way, He became a sinless God-man. This God-man is the complete God and a perfect man, having both divinity and humanity. He is the One prophesied in Isaiah 9:6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given…and his name shall be called…the almighty God, the everlasting Father." He is the child, yet He is God. He is the Son, yet He is also the Father. He is the mysterious God-man.

Moreover, all those who believe in Him have also become God-men. John 1:12 13 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave authority to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born…of God." Those who were born of man are men. Hence, those who were born of God are gods. But this does not mean that we who are born of God share in His Godhead. We do not have God's person, and we cannot be worshipped as God. However, as far as our life goes, we are the same as God is. God has regenerated us and has given His life to us. This is like being begotten of our father; we share the same life as our father. He is a man. As those begotten of him, we are also men. However, we do not have the position of the father. From this point of view, we are the same as the God who has regenerated us, and He and we are both God-men.

When the Triune God became flesh, He dispensed Himself to men as grace and reality. This grace is God enjoyed by man, and this reality is God gained by man. In John 4, the Lord Jesus went purposely to Sychar in Samaria and sat by the well of Jacob, waiting for a Samaritan woman to come to draw water. The Lord Jesus told her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." Then He said, "But whoever

drinks of the water that I shall give him shall by no means thirst forever" (vv. 10, 14). The Lord Jesus freely gave the living water to man. There is no price to be paid and no labor required. This is grace. Furthermore, this living water can give man the satisfaction of life and can quench man's deepest thirst. This is reality. This living water is the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, with the Father expressed in the Son, and the Son realized as the Spirit, being dispensed into man. In John 7 the Lord Jesus also said, "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me…out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." The Lord Jesus said this concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were about to receive (John 7:7-39). The Spirit is the consummation of the Triune God. He is the living water, given to us freely. This is grace. When we receive Him, our thirst is satisfied, and we are no longer empty. This is reality.

In John 9 we see a man born blind. The Lord Jesus as the light of the world came to him, spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, anointed his eyes with the clay, and ordered him to wash in the pool of Siloam. When he washed, he came back seeing (John 9:1-7). He did not pay any price, yet he was healed freely. This is God's grace. The Lord Jesus as the light of the world had cause him to see and to be no longer blind. This is reality.

The Triune God Dispensing the Son as Eternal Life to His Believers

The Son as God's grace and reality is dispensed into all those who believe in Him. In other words, as the eternal life, God's only begotten Son is dispensed to us (John 3:16).

The Son Dying to Release the Divine Life and to Dispense It to All the Members of His Body

John 12:24 shows us that the Lord Jesus as the divine grain of wheat—containing the divine life and glory—released the divine life through the breaking of the shell of His body in death to produce many grains to be formed into one loaf, which is the church, the Body of Christ, to

be His increase, for the expression of His glory. This is the divine dispensing.

The Son Resurrecting to Be Transfigured as the Spirit To be the Ultimate Consummation of the Triune God, That the Triune God May Be Dispensed into the Believers

When the Lord entered into resurrection, He became the life-giving Spirit. The Word which was there in the beginning was the Triune God Himself. He became flesh, passed through human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ultimately, in resurrection became the Spirit, who is the ultimate consummation of the Triune God.

On the night of resurrection, the Lord came into the midst of the disciples and breathed into them a breath, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). The Holy Spirit here is actually the resurrected Christ Himself, because the Spirit is simply His breath. The Word which was there in the beginning eventually became the breath, who is the Triune God Himself. The Father is the source, the Son is the flow, and the Spirit is the realization. The Triune God is realized as the life-giving Spirit. This is like the big watermelon becoming the melon juice that has become easy for man to receive. Hence, 1 Corinthian 12:13 says, "we were…all given to drink one Spirit." By this, the Triune God Himself is dispensed into us to be our life and everything to us. This is the accomplishment of the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity.

The Son Being Above All, Inheriting All, And Being Sent From God to Speak God's Word, And Dispensing the Spirit Without Measure

John 3 reveals to us that this Son who became flesh, died, and resurrected to become the Spirit, is above all, inheriting all, and is sent from God to speak God's word. In the Old Testament time, God spoke through the prophets. But in the New Testament, He speaks to us in the Son (Heb. 1:1-2a). The Son is simply God Himself. He is the expressed God.

While He was on earth, whatever He spoke, whether it was teaching, preaching of the gospel, or discourses, and whether it was spoken on the mountain, by the seashore, or in the houses, it was all the Father's words.

According to the principle of the Bible, the word of God is simply God Himself. To hear God's word is to hear God. To receive God's word is to receive God. Moreover, the word and the Spirit cannot be separated from each other. The word is the Spirit (John 6:63). While the Lord Jesus was on earth, not only did He speak for God, but He also came to dispense the Spirit (John 3:34). The Spirit is the ultimate consummation of the Triune God. Through this dispensing which is without measure, the processed Triune God is injected into us to become our all. (A Deeper Study of the Divine Dispensing, pp. 17-20)

THE BELIEVERS' EXPERIENCE OF THE DISPENSING OF THE DIVINE TRINITY

The Triune God, who has been processed and is dispensed into us, has Himself become the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). This law of the Spirit of life is the automatic and spontaneous capacity of the Triune God as life in the believers. …The processed Triune God has been put into us; He is now operating in us according to a law and not according to an activity. Today, He is a law operating within us. He is not operating in us merely as the Almighty God, but is operating in us spontaneously as a law that is transforming us. Our need today is to cooperate with the life function of the Triune God in our spirit.

Our experience of the dispensing of the Divine Trinity begins with regeneration in our spirit. Regeneration makes our spirit life (Rom. 8:10). Next, our experience continues by our setting our mind on the spirit; this makes the mind in our soul life (Rom. 8:6b). Then, by the indwelling Spirit we put to death the practices of the body, making our mortal body also life (Rom. 8:13, 11). Furthermore, we walk only according to the spirit (Rom. 8:4). In this way our whole being will be saturated by the Spirit, and we will fully experience the dispensing of the Divine Trinity in our tripartite

being. We will daily experience the increase of the Triune God in us. This is the growth in life, which continues until we are mature in life. At that time we will enjoy all the blessings of God's presence. (The Economy and Dispensing of God, pp. 22-24)

THE DIVINE DISPENSING OF THE DIVINE TRINITY PRODUCING THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

Christ in us is like electricity. Every day He is transmitting, and this transmission is a dispensing. The result of this transmission, this dispensing, is that the church is produced. This church is the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all. Because Christ is so great, all-inclusive, all-extensive, and fills all in all, He needs a universal Body which is the church. By the dispensing of the Father, the dispensing of the Son, the dispensing of the Spirit, plus the all-surpassing transmission of Christ, God has transmitted Himself into us. The result is the producing of the church. The church is not an organization, nor is it merely a gathering of the believers. When we enjoy the dispensing of the Divine Trinity, and come together to transmit this dispensing to others, making it their enjoyment as well, that is the church. (A Deeper Study of the Divine Dispensing, pp. 161-162)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, describe briefly how God dispenses Himself into man?

2. Describe briefly the divine dispensing in Ephesians 1.

3. How does the Divine Trinity carry out the divine dispensing?

4. Describe briefly the believers' experience of the divine dispensing.

LESSON THREE

GOD'S NEW TESTAMENT ECONOMY

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 1:9-10 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph. 3:9-11 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Col. 1:25-27 Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God, The mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations but now has been manifested to His saints; To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,

Hymn: 119

OUTLINE

I. From the Gospel of Matthew to the Gospel of John—introductory:

A. The Son with the Father by the Spirit—John 8:29; 16:32b; Matt. 1:18, 20.

John 8:29 And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.

John 16:32b Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

Matt. 1:18 Now the origin of Jesus Christ was in this way: His mother, Mary, after she had been engaged to Joseph, before they came together, was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 1:20 But while he pondered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which has been begotten in her is

of the Holy Spirit.

B. The embodiment of the Triune God in Jesus Christ as God's tabernacle and God's temple—Col. 2:9; John 1:14; 2:19, 21.

Col. 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

John 2:19 Jesus answered and said to them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

John 2:21 But He spoke of the temple of His body.

C. Living the life of God to developed into the kingdom of God—Mark 4:3, 26; Luke 17:20, 21; John 6:57.

Mark 4:3 Listen! Behold, the sower went out to sow.

Mark 4:26 And He said, So is the kingdom of God: as if a man cast seed on the earth.

Luke 17:20 And when He was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation;

Luke 17:21 Nor will they say, Behold, here it is! or, There! For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.

John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.

II. From Acts to Jude (twenty-two books)—development:

A. This life-giving Spirit being the Son with the Father—1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17a; John 14:23; 15:26.

1 Cor. 15:45b … the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

2 Cor. 3:17a And the Lord is the Spirit; …

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.

John 15:26 But when the Comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of reality, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify concerning Me.

B. The consummation of the Triune God in the church as the Body of Christ, the temple of God, the kingdom of God, and the house of God—Eph. 1:23; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:19.

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

1 Cor. 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Eph. 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

C. Living Christ to become the fullness of God—Phil. 1:21a; Eph. 3:19.

Phil. 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ.

Eph. 3:19 love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

III. Revelation—the conclusion:

A. The seven Spirits are out from the eternal One of the Redeemer—Rev. 1:4-5; 5:6.

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

Rev. 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood.

Rev. 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

B. The intensification of the Triune God in the overcoming church—cf. Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

C. The ultimate consummation:

1. The golden lampstands—Rev. 1:11-12, 20.

Rev. 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

Rev. 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands.

Rev. 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

2. The New Jerusalem—Rev. 21:2, 9, 10.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven

last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

Rev. 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

REFERENCE

God's New Testament Economy, Ch. 1; The New Testament Recovery Version, The Chart of God's New Testament Economy.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE NEW TESTAMENT
UNVEILING A WONDERFUL PERSON

There are twenty-seven books in the New Testament. When I was young, I was taught that the New Testament could be divided into three sections. The first section was the five books from Matthew through Acts, the historical books. The second section was comprised of the Epistles, the letters written by the apostles from Romans through Jude. The last section was comprised of the book of Revelation, a book of prophecy. I would not say that this interpretation is wrong, but it is superficial.

The New Testament unveils to us a wonderful Person. This wonderful Person was first the Son of God unveiled in the four Gospels. Then this Person became the life-giving Spirit, unveiled in a full and detailed way in the twenty-two books from Acts through Jude. Then in Revelation this life-giving Spirit is intensified into the seven Spirits. By this we can see that the New Testament shows us a Person as the Son of God, as the Spirit, and eventually as the seven Spirits.

I have been studying the Bible nearly every day since 1925. The chart on pages 12 and 13 is the consummation, final reaping, and extract of my fifty-nine years of studying the New Testament. This chart shows us that the content of God's New Testament economy is a Person. To say that this

Person is Jesus Christ is right, but not absolutely, perfectly, and completely right. The content of the New Testament economy of God is a Person, and this Person is the Triune God. God's oikonomia, God's household administration, is to distribute Himself as the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—into all His chosen people. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament are a full revelation of one great Person—the Triune God. No one is greater than the Triune God. His greatness reaches to an extent which is far beyond our apprehension.

THE SON, WITH THE FATHER, BY THE SPIRIT— THE EMBODIMENT OF THE TRIUNE GOD

In the four Gospels, this wonderful Person was revealed as the Son of God coming with the Father by the Spirit to be the embodiment of the Triune God in Jesus Christ as God's tabernacle and God's temple living the life of God to develop into the kingdom of God. This is in the Gospels as the initiation.

The New Testament reveals that when the Son of God came, He came with the Father (John 8:29; 16:32). The Son said that He was never alone on this earth because the Father was with Him all the time. The Son was with the Father and by the Spirit. Matthew 1:18 and 20 tells us that Mary "was found having in womb out of the Holy Spirit" (lit.). and "the thing begotten (generated) in her is out of the Holy Spirit" (lit.). the Holy Spirit was the very divine essence that constituted Jesus' conception. The One who was born of the virgin Mary and named Jesus had the divine essence in His being; this was the reason that He was born not merely as a man but as the God-man. He was the complete God and the perfect Man because the divine essence was His very constitution. Therefore, the Son came in the flesh with the Father and by the Spirit.

Also, the Son with the Father by the Spirit came to be the embodiment of the Triune God (Col. 2:9). This One is the Triune God embodied. Do not consider that the Son could be alone, separated from the Father or from the Spirit. According to the entire revelation of the Bible, the Father, the Son,

and the Spirit are coexisting and coinhering from eternity pasts to eternity future. Coexisting means to exist together at the same time, but coinhering means to exist within one another, to abide in each other. When the Lord Jesus told Philip that He was in the Father and that the Father was in Him, this is coinhering. It is easy to demonstrate the coexistence of three items. It is more than difficult, however, to demonstrate the coinherence of three items. How marvelous it is that the three of the Godhead coexist and coinhere from eternity to eternity! (God' New Testament Economy, pp. 11-14)

THE SPIRIT, AS THE SON, WITH THE FATHER— THE CONSUMMATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD IN THE CHURCH

In the twenty-two books of the Bible from Acts to Jude we see the Spirit as the Son. First Corinthians 15:45b tells us that the last Adam, Jesus Christ, became a life-giving Spirit, and 2 Corinthians 3:17 tells us, "the Lord is the Spirit". In these twenty-two books, the main figure is the Spirit—the Spirit as the Son with the Father. 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". This means that when the Son comes, He always comes with the Father. The Epistles tell us clearly that the Spirit is the Son; He is also with the Father because the Father is always with the Son. The spirit as the son with the Father is the consummation of the Triune God in the church.

The embodiment of the Triune God was in Jesus Christ, and the consummation of the Triune God is in the church as the Body of Christ and the temple of God. The Body of Christ is the kingdom of God, and the temple of God is the house of God living Christ. The church today is living Christ. We all are living Christ every day unto the fullness of God, which is the very expression of God, the Triune God. This is in the twenty-two books of the Bible from Acts to Jude as the development. Christ was the initiation to develop into His enlargement which is the church, the fullness of the Triune God. (pp. 17-18)

THE SEVEN SPIRITS, OUT FROM THE ETERNAL ONE, OF THE REDEEMER—THE INTENSIFICATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD IN THE OVERCOMING CHURCH

In the third section, Revelation, we see the seven Spirits out from the Eternal One, the One who was, who is and who is coming. The seven Spirits are out from the Eternal One and of the Redeemer (Rev. 1:4-5) to be the intensification of the Triune God in the overcoming church, consummating in the golden lampstands and in the New Jerusalem. This is the finalization in the book of Revelation. The intensification of the Triune God in the overcoming church consummates in the golden lampstands in this age and in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth in eternity.

The seven Spirits are not only out from the Eternal One, but they also belong to the Redeemer because the seven Spirits come out of the throne of the Eternal One and the seven Spirits are the seven eyes of the Lamb. In Revelation the Trinity is the seven Spirits out from the Eternal One and of the Redeemer. This is the intensification of the Triune God. Now we have three words to describe the Triune God in the New Testament—embodiment, consummation, and intensification. In the four Gospels is the Triune God embodied in Jesus Christ; in Acts through Jude is the Triune God consummated in the church; finally, in Revelation is the Triune God intensified in the overcoming church consummating in the golden lampstands in this age and in the New Jerusalem in eternity. This is the book of Revelation, and this is the finalization of God's economy. (p. 18-20)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly God's New Testament economy revealed in the four Gospels.

2. Describe briefly God's New Testament economy revealed in Acts through Jude.

3. Describe briefly God's New Testament economy revealed in Revelation.

LESSON FOUR

THE PERSON AND NATURE OF THE TRIUNE GOD

Scripture Reading:

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

2Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2Pet. 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

Hymn: 609

OUTLINE

I. The person of the Triune God:

A. Elohim, God in plural, the Faithful Mighty One—Gen. 1:1.

Gen. 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

B. The Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—Gen. 1:26-27; Matt. 28:19:

Gen. 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Gen. 1:27 And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

1. Baptizing into the Triune God—Matt. 28:19:

a. This verse has one name for the divine trinity (here the name is singular)—the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

b. To baptize a person into the name of the Trinity is to immerse that person into all that the Triune God is.

2. The grace of Christ, the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit—2 Cor. 13:14:

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

a. The grace of the Lord is the Lord Himself as life to us for our enjoyment, the love of God is God Himself as the source of grace of the Lord, and the fellowship of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself as the transmission of the Lord with the love of God for our participation.

b. Lord, God, and the Holy Spirit are not three separate Gods but three "hypostases of the one same undivided and indivisible" God.

3. The Triune God is in us—Eph. 4:6, Col. 1:27; John 14:17.

Eph. 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Col. 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

John 14:17 Even 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.

II. The nature of the Triune God:

A. The nature of God's person: Spirit—John 4:24a.

John 4:24a God is Spirit.

B. The nature of God's essence: love, the source of the grace—1 John 4:8b.

1 John 4:8b God is love.

C. The nature of God's expression: light, the source of the truth—1 John 1:5a.

1 John 1:5a God is light.

III. Partaking of God's nature—2 Pet. 1:4:

2 Pet. 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

A. Enjoy what God is—2 Cor. 12:9.

2 Cor. 12:9 And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my

weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me.

B. Constituted of God's nature—John 1:12-13.

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name,

John 1:13 Who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

IV. God's heart—love—Eph. 2:4.

Eph. 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

V. God's works—righteousness—Rev. 15:3.

Rev. 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty! Righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!

VI. God's word—faithfulness—Psa. 89:33-34.

Psa. 89:33 But My lovingkindness I will not utterly take away from Him, Nor will I be false to My own faithfulness.

Psa. 89:34 I will not profane My covenant, Nor will I change what has gone forth from My lips.

VII. God's nature—holiness—1 Pet. 1:16.

1 Pet. 1:16 Because it is written, "You shall be holy because I am holy."

VIII. God Himself—glory—Acts 7:2.

Acts 7:2 And he said, Men, brothers and fathers, listen. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran.

REFERENCE

The Practice of the Church Life According to the God-ordained Way, Msg. 6; The Conclusion of the New Testament Vol. 1, Msgs. 3, 7; Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 4, Msg. 34.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE PERSON OF THE TRIUNE GOD

The first item we all must learn is the truth concerning the person of God. This is the most puzzling truth in the Bible.

Elohim, God in Plural, the Faithful Mighty One

God's name in Hebrew is Elohim (Gen. 1:1). This word is a noun which is plural in number. The meaning of this divine title is that God is the faithful, mighty One. God is mighty and faithful. Hence, He is altogether trustworthy. Because He is mighty, He can do everything for us. Because He is faithful, He will do everything for us according to His word, according to His promise, and according to His covenant.

The Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit

God is unique. He is uniquely one, and yet He is also three. He is the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Gen. 1:26-27; Matt. 28:19). The word triune comes from Latin. *Tri* is three and *une* is one. Thus, triune is three-one. God is the three-one God. In mathematics, there is no such number as three-one. Nevertheless, our God is three-one. He is one yet three, and He is three yet one. (The Practice of the Church Life According to the God-ordained Way, pp. 72-73)

Baptizing into the Triune God

After Christ, as the last Adam, had passed through the process of crucifixion, entered into the realm of resurrection, and become the life-giving Spirit, He came back to His disciples, in the atmosphere and reality of His resurrection, to charge them to make the heathen the kingdom people by baptizing them into the name, the person, the reality, of the Trinity. …To be baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and the Spirit is to be baptized into the name of Christ (Acts 8:16; 19:5); to be baptized into the name of Christ is to be baptized into the person of Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3); Because Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God and has become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), He is available and people can be baptized into Him at any time and in any place.

According to Matthew, such a baptism into the reality of the Father, Son, and Spirit is for the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens. The heavenly kingdom cannot be organized with human beings of flesh and blood (1 Cor. 15:50) as an earthly society; it can be constituted only of people who are immersed into union with the Triune God and who are established and, built up with the Triune God who is wrought into them. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 22-23)

The Grace of Christ, the Love of God, the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit

Another verse that reveals the Triune God is 2 Corinthians 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all". The grace of the Lord is the Lord Himself as life to us for our enjoyment (John 1:17; 1 Cor. 15:10), the love of God is God Himself (1 John 4:8, 16) as the source of the grace of the Lord, and the fellowship of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself as the transmission of the grace of the Lord with the love of God for our participation. These are not three separate matters but three aspects of one thing, just as the Lord, God, and the Holy Spirit are not three separate Gods but three "hypostases… of the one same undivided and indivisible" God (Philip Schaff). The Greek word for hypostasis (used in Heb. 11:1—see note 2 there), the singular form of hypostases, refers to a support under, a support beneath, i.e., something underneath that supports, a supporting substance. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the hypostases, the supporting substances, that compose the one Godhead.

The love of God is the source, since God is the origin. The grace of the Lord is the course of the love of God, since the Lord is the expression of God/ the fellowship of the Spirit is the impartation of the grace of the Lord with the love of God, since the Spirit is the transmission of the Lord with God for our experience and enjoyment of the Triune God with all His attributes. Here the grace of the Lord is mentioned first because 2 Corinthians is a book on the grace of Christ (1:12; 4:15; 6:1; 8:1, 9; 9:8, 14;

12:9). Second Corinthians 13:14 is strong proof that the Trinity of the Godhead is not for the doctrinal understanding of systematic theology, but for the dispensing of God Himself in His Trinity into His chosen and redeemed people. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 1, pp. 23-24)

The Triune God is in us

We need to see that the God who is dispensing Himself into us is triune. Do you realize that the Triune God is in you? According to the New Testament, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all in us (Eph. 4:6; Col. 1:27; john 14:17). Although the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all in us, in our experience we sense that there is just One in us. This One who dwells in us is the Triune God. (p. 32)

THE NATURE OF THE TRIUNE GOD

What is God's nature? According to the New Testament God is Spirit (John 4:24), love (1 John 4:8, 16), and light (1 John 1:5). The expressions, "God is Spirit", "God is love" and "God is light", are not used in a metaphoric sense, but in a predicative sense. These expressions denote and describe the nature of God.

Spirit Denoting the Nature of God's Person;
Love Denoting the Nature of God's Essence;
Light Denoting the nature of God's Expression

In His nature God is Spirit, love, and light. Spirit denotes the nature of God's person; love, the nature of God's essence; and light, the nature of God's expression. Both love and light are related to God as life, which life is of the Spirit (Rom. 8:2). God, Spirit, and life are actually one. God is Spirit, and Spirit is life. Within such a life are love and light. When this divine love appears to us, it becomes grace, and when this divine light shines upon us, it becomes truth.

The Gospel of John reveals that the Lord Jesus has brought grace and truth to us (John 1:14, 17) so that we may have the divine life (John

3:14-16). Whereas the Epistle of 1 John unveils that the fellowship of the divine life brings us to the very sources of grace and truth, which are the divine love and the divine light. First John is the continuation of the Gospel of John. In the Gospel it was God in the Son coming to us as grace and truth so that we may become His children. In the Epistle of 1 John it is we, the children, in the fellowship of the Father's life, coming to the Father in order to participate in His love and light. The former was God coming out to the outer court to meet our need at the altar with His grace and truth (Lev. 4:28-31); the latter is we entering into the Holy of Holies to contact Him at the ark in the divine love and light (Exo. 25:22). This is further and deeper in the experience of the divine life.

God is Spirit. This refers to His person. God is also love and light. Love refers to His essence, and light, to His expression. Both God's love and light are related to His life. This life is actually God Himself. Life is also the Spirit.

When this life was manifested, it came with grace and truth. When we received the Lord Jesus, we received life, and now we enjoy grace and truth. This life brings us back to God to enjoy His love and light. First, God came to us so that we may receive grace and truth. Now we go back to the Father and contact Him as the source of grace and truth, and this source is love and light. Therefore, in the fellowship of the divine life we are being brought back to God to enjoy His love as the source of grace and His light as the source of truth. (pp. 67-68)

PARTAKING GOD'S NATURE

We need to pay close attention to the matter of being partakers of the divine nature. 2 Peter 1:4 says, "Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises, that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust". Through the precious and exceedingly great promises given by God, we, the believers in Christ, who is our God and Savior, have become partakers of His divine nature in an organic union with Him. We have entered into this union through faith and baptism (John

3:15; Gal. 3:27; Matt. 28:19). The virtue of this divine nature carries us into God's glory, into the full expression of the Triune God.

Through the "precious and exceedingly great promises" we may become partakers of the divine nature. We receive the divine life simply by believing, and the divine nature is the substance of the divine life. Although we received the divine life at the time we believed, the divine nature must be continually enjoyed by us. This enjoyment requires to grace of God. The more we enjoy the divine nature, the more we have His virtue, and the more we are brought into His glory.

Partaking of the Divine Nature being Enjoying What God is

In order that we may enjoy all that He is, God will do many things for us according to His precious and exceedingly great promises. This will enable us to enjoy His nature, what He is. One of His precious and exceedingly great promises is that His grace is sufficient for us (2 Cor. 12:9). God's sufficient grace will work within us day by day so that we may enjoy His nature. Whatever God is, is in His nature. Therefore, when we partake of the divine nature, we partake of the divine riches. Having received the divine life at the time of our regeneration, we must go on to enjoy what God is in His nature.

This enjoyment is both for the present and for eternity. For eternity we shall continue to partake of the divine nature. This is illustrated by the tree of life and the river water of life in Revelation 22:1 and 2. out from the throne of God and the Lamb the river of life flows. This signifies God flowing out to be the enjoyment of His redeemed. That flowing river will saturate the entire city of New Jerusalem, and the tree of life that grows in and along the river will supply the redeemed with God as their life supply. This is a picture of what it means to partake of the divine nature.

Constituted Of God's Nature

Just as we are constituted physically of the food we eat, so we, believers

in Christ, should be constituted of the God of which we partake. This should be our experience day by day. If we enjoy God and partake of Him, we shall be constituted of Him. We shall be thoroughly constituted of God's nature.

We all are constituted physically of the food we eat. For example, someone may eat so much fish and be constituted of fish to such an extent that he even smells of fish. In like manner, we may become so constituted of God that we express God in all that we are and do. We may even give off a divine "fragrance." If we partake of God day by day, eventually we shall partake of Him unconsciously. When others contact us, they will see in us the expression of the Triune God. All the saints need to be constituted with the nature of God. The more we are constituted with God, the more we shall express Him.

To be a partaker of the divine nature is to be a partaker of the elements, the ingredients, of God's being. When we partake of God, the aspects of what God is become our enjoyment. This is to enjoy the constituents of the divine nature. (pp. 63-65)

GOD'S HEART—LOVE

"God so loved the world" (John 3:16). God's heart is just love, so He loved the world. "Who desires all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4; Matt. 23:37; 8:3; cf. Ezek. 18:23; 33:11; Isa. 49:15; Jer. 3:1). God desires all men to be saved because He loves man. Because His heart is love, He "desires" to save men, He "is willing" to save men and does not want men to perish. His love is greater than a mother's love for her children and is greater than a husband's love for his wife.

GOD'S WORK—RIGHTEOUSNESS

The reason God justifies us who are of the faith of Jesus is because He is righteous and to demonstrate His righteousness, that He might be shown righteous. We originally were sinful and unrighteous. We could not obtain God's justification. But God caused Jesus, who was the One without sin, to receive the righteous punishment for us, the unrighteous ones (1 Pet. 3:18).

For our sake, He judged the Lord Jesus according to righteousness to satisfy His righteous requirements. Now when we believe in and receive the Lord Jesus and are joined to the Lord Jesus, He must justify us according to His righteousness. He cannot condemn us any longer. He already punished us on the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus already shed His blood for our sins according to His righteousness. Now when we believe in the Lord Jesus, He must forgive our sins. Because He is righteous, He cannot be unrighteous, He cannot fail to forgive us.

GOD'S WORD—FAITHFULNESS

God's actions are righteous; His word is faithful. According to God's salvation toward us, God's word is an improvement over His actions. Although God's actions accomplished salvation for us, if He does not use His word to tell us, it appears that it still could change. It is not only true about His word as God, if a faithful person speaks, once the word has left his mouth, it cannot be erased.

God cannot lie, so the word He speaks to us is completely faithful and reliable. It cannot be changed or erased. His word is established in the heavens. The grass will wither, the flowers will wilt, but His word is eternally established. Even when the heavens and earth pass away, His word cannot pass away.

Furthermore, the word which God speaks to us in the Bible is not merely ordinary words or promises, even more, it is a covenant which He has established with us. The Bible is a book of testament, so it is called the New and Old Testaments. The word of the Bible is the covenant which has established with us according to His faithfulness. We only need to grasp these words of His, and He has no way to change. He must keep His covenant. He must be limited by His covenant and by His word.

GOD'S NATURE—HOLINESS

God's nature is not only holy, it is holiness…. To be holy is to be separated from everything. To say God's nature is holy is to say God's

nature—that is God's essence—is separated from everything else. Because God's nature, His essence, is holy, is separated from everything else, He wants us who belong to Him to be holy, to be separated from everything apart from Him. If we are not like this, we will not be able to see Him nor will we be able to come close to Him.

GOD HIMSELF—GLORY

God Himself is glory. Every time God manifests Himself for man to see, there is always the appearance of glory. Wherever the glory of God is, God Himself is also there. In ancient times, Moses and the children of Israel saw the glory of God abiding on Mount Sinai. Later, Ezekiel all saw the glory of God several times. When they saw the glory of God, they saw God Himself. When they were before the glory of God, they were before God Himself.

Jeremiah 2 also says that the God of Israel is "their glory". Man originally replaced God with idols. But Psalm 106:20 here and Romans 1:23 both say that man replaced God's glory with idols. Therefore, these few passages show us that the glory of God is God Himself.

The glory of God is God Himself especially when He appears to man. (Heb. 1:2). It does not matter what person, event or object manifests God, it always expresses God's glory. The phrase give glory to God means to express God. (The Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 4, Ch. 34)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, briefly describe the Person of the Triune God.

2. According to the Bible, briefly describe the nature of the Triune God.

3. According to the Bible, briefly describe how a believer may partake of God's nature?

4. According to the Bible, briefly describe what are God's heart, God's work, God's word, and God Himself?

LESSON FIVE

THE REVELATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD IN THE PURE WORD OF THE BIBLE

Scripture Reading:

Gen. 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Isa. 9:6 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; and the government is upon His shoulder; and His name will be called Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

2 Cor. 3:17a …And the Lord is the Spirit;

Hymns: 12

OUTLINE

I. God being only one—1 Cor. 8:4, Isa. 45:5.

1 Cor. 8:4 Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world and that there is no God but one.

Isa. 45:5 I am Jehovah and there is no one else; Besides Me there is no God; I girded you, although you do not know Me.

II. God having the aspect of three—the Father, the Son and the Spirit:

A. God speaking as I and also as Us—Isa. 6:8; Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; John 14:23.

Isa. 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us? And I said, Here am I; send me.

Gen. 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Gene. 3:22 And Jehovah God said, Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever—

Gen. 11:7 Come, let Us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.

B. The matter concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—Matt. 28:19.

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

III. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit coexisting simultaneously from eternity to eternity:

A. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit all being God:

1. The Father being God—1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:17.

1 Pet. 1:2 Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

Eph. 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him.

2. The Son being God—Heb. 1:8, Rom. 9:5.

Heb. 1:8 But of the Son, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

Rom. 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and out of whom, as regards what is according to flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

3. The Spirit being God—Acts 5:3-4.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to deceive the Holy Spirit and to put aside for yourself some of the proceeds of the land?

Acts 5:4 While it remained, was it not your own? And when it was sold, was it not under your authority? Why is it that you have contrived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.

B. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit all being eternal:

1. The Father being eternal—Isa. 9:6.

Isa. 9:6 For a child is born to us, A son is given to us; And the government Is upon His shoulder; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

2. The Son being eternal—Heb. 1:12b.

Heb. 1:12b But You are the same, and Your years will not fail.

3. The Spirit being eternal—Heb. 9:14.

Heb. 9:14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

C. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit coexisting simultaneously—John 14:16-17; Eph. 3:14-17; 2 Cor. 13:14.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever,

John 14:17 Even 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.

Eph. 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father,

Eph. 3:15 Of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named,

Eph. 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,

Eph. 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

IV. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit coinhering and being inseparable:

A. The Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son—John 14:10.

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.

B. The Father being with the Son—John 8:29.

John 8:29 And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.

C. The Son being begotten of the Holy Spirit and being full of the Holy Spirit—Matt. 1:18-20; Luke 4:1.

Matt. 1:18 Now the origin of Jesus Christ was in this way: His mother, Mary, after she had been engaged to Joseph, before they came together, was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 1:19 And Joseph her husband, being righteous and not willing to disgrace her openly, intended to send her away secretly.

Matt. 1:20 But while he pondered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 4:1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, while being tempted for forty days by the devil.

D. The Son cast out the demons by the Spirit of God—Matt. 12:28.

Matt. 12:28 But if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

E. The Holy Spirit coming in the Son's name equals the Son's coming—John 14:26.

John 14:26 But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and remind you of all the things which I have said to you.

V. The Three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—being one:

A. The Son being the Father—Isa. 9:6.

Isa. 9:6 For a child is born to us, A son is given to us; And the government Is upon His shoulder; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

B. The Son (the last Adam) becoming the life giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b.

1 Cor. 15:45b …The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

C. The Lord (Son) being the Spirit—2 Cor. 3:17a.

2 Cor. 3:17a And the Lord is the Spirit…

VI. The reason for God being triune: to dispense Himself into us, to work Himself into us, to be our enjoyment, and to be our all—2 Cor. 13:14:

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

A. God being love, the love of the Father being the source.

B. The grace of Christ being the grace of the Son being the flowing out of God's love.

C. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit being the grace of the Son flowing

into us with the love of the Father to be our enjoyment.

D. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not three Gods, but one God with the aspect of three for us to possess and enjoy.

REFERENCE

Truth Lessons, Level One, Vol. 1, Lsn. 2.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE TRIUNE GOD BEING A MYSTERY, BUT WE CAN RECEIVE AND ENJOY HIM

The Bible reveals that God is triune. This is a revelation of great importance. God is uniquely one, and His name is Jehovah; yet this God is also triune—He is the Father, Son, and Spirit. This is a mystery; in fact, it is a mystery of mysteries. Small and finite as we are, we human beings cannot understand it thoroughly; even less can we define it in a full way. Many things relating to the matter of life are not within the comprehension of men; men can only have a general idea of them. For instance, though we have life in our physical body, no one can explain it thoroughly, for life is a mystery. Furthermore, there is a spirit within us—this is even more of a mystery. No one can give a full explanation of what the life of man and the spirit of man are. We are not able to comprehend such a comparatively small mystery as man, to say nothing of the great mystery of the Triune God—the Father, Son, and Spirit. If we cannot fully understand man, how much less the Triune God!

Nevertheless, we can receive and enjoy this mysterious God. We cannot understand, but we can enjoy! In former days men had no knowledge of vitamins, though they greatly enjoyed their benefit. The Triune God is not for us to understand, but to enjoy. All that He is for us to enjoy is revealed in the Scriptures; we cannot fully understand it, yet we may, according to all that is declared in the Scriptures, accept whatever is said.

Although we cannot find the term “triune” in the Scriptures, we can see the fact concerning the Trinity of the Godhead. Let us now examine the verses in the Bible that are more evidently related to this matter.

GOD BEING ONLY ONE

The Scripture in many instances and in many ways tell us that God is uniquely one. Both in the Old Testament and in the New, there are many passages which clearly and definitely tell us that God is only one. First Corinthians 8:4 says, “There is no God but one,” and Isaiah 45:5 says, “I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me.” Similar words also can be found in Isaiah 45:6, 21, 22; and 44:6,9.

Perhaps some will ask, “Since God is only one, why did God speak of Himself as Us in Genesis 1:26? And why did He say Our image? Is there just one God, or is there more than one?” The answer is: He is the Triune God; He is one, yet three—the Father, Son, and Spirit.

GOD HAVING THE ASPECT OF THREE— THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE SPIRIT

God Speaking As I And Also As Us

In Isaiah 6:8 God says, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” God speaks of Himself on one hand as I and on the other hand as Us. This proves that I is Us and Us is I; I and Us are identical. Then, is God singular or plural? If you say He is plural, He says I. If you say He is singular, He says Us. This is rather mysterious and difficult to understand, so we simply take the scriptural revelation as it is.

Furthermore, Gen 1:26 says, “And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” That the only God, in His divine word, speaks of Himself a number of times as Us is truly a mystery which is hard for us to understand. Nevertheless, we must believe that it is because of God being the Father, Son, and Spirit.

The Matter Concerning The Father, The Son,

And The Holy Spirit

The Lord says in Matthew 28:19, "Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The Lord here clearly speaks of Three—the Father, Son, and Spirit. But when He speaks here of the name of the Father, Son and Spirit, the name which is used is in the singular number in the original text. This means that though the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three, yet the name is one. It is really mysterious—one name for Three. This, of course, is what is meant by the expression three-one, are triune.

Is the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, as spoken by the Lord here, the name Father, or Son, or Holy Spirit? It is difficult to answer. All we can say is that the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." This name includes the Three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and tells us that God is triune. Although God is only one, yet there is the matter of the Three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE SPIRIT COEXISTING SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM ETERNITY TO ETERNITY

The Father, The Son, And The Spirit All Being God

The Father being God

Undoubtedly, the Father is God. Many passages in the New Testament speak of God the Father. For example, 1 Peter 1:2 says, "According to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Ephesians 1:17 says, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory…."

The Son being God

The Son is also God. Hebrews 1:8 says, "But as to the Son, Your throne, O God…." Here the Son is called God. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word

must be Christ, the Son. Because the Word is God, the Son also is God. Not only so, Romans 9:5 says, "Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever." Christ the Son is not only God, but He is over all, God blessed forever.

The Spirit being God

In Acts 5:3-4 we see that the Spirit is God. In verse 3 Peter told Ananias that he had lied to the Spirit, but in the next verse he said that he had lied to God. In these two verses the Holy Spirit equals God.

Therefore, the Scriptures clearly reveal to us that all Three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—are God. This does not mean, however, that They are three Gods. We have already seen that the Scriptures tell us clearly and definitely that God is only one. Although there are three—the Father, Son, and Spirit—yet the Three are no three Gods, but one. This is really a mystery! It is unsearchable! But we can simply receive and enjoy this mysterious One according to what the Scriptures have said!

The Father, The Son, And The Spirit All Being Eternal

The Father Being Eternal

Isaiah 9:6 contains the expression "the everlasting Father." According to its literal meaning in Hebrew, this expression may be rendered "the eternal Father." Hence, the Father is eternal.

The Son Being Eternal

The Son also is eternal. Hebrews 1:12 says concerning the Son, "You are the same, and Your years shall not fail." Hebrews 7:3 also says that the Son has no beginning of days nor end of life, which means that He is eternal.

The Spirit Being Eternal

The Spirit also is eternal because Hebrews 9:14 speaks of "the eternal Spirit." Hence, all Three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—are eternal.

The Father, The Son, And The Spirit

Coexisting Simultaneously

John 14:16-17 says, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, even the Spirit of reality." In these two verses the Son says that He will pray to the Father that the Father may send the Spirit. Hence, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit exist together at the same time.

In Ephesians 3:14-17 Paul says that he will pray to the Father, that He would grant us to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into our inner man, that Christ may make His home in our hearts. In this passage we have the Father, the Spirit, and Christ the Son. All three exist together at the same time. The Scriptures do not say that the Father existed for a period of time, then the Son came, and that after another period of time, the Son no longer exists but has been replace by the Spirit. Not one verse says this. This portion of the Word shows that the Father hears the prayer, the Son strengthens the saints, and the Son—Christ—makes His home in our hearts. From this we can also see clearly that all Three coexist simultaneously.

Second Corinthians 13:14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Here it mentions the grace of Christ the Son, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. All Three exist together at the same time.

Therefore, we do not believe that the Father ceased to exist and was replaced by the Son, then after another period of time the Son was replaced by the Spirit. We believe that the Three—Father, Son, and Spirit—are eternal and co-existent.

THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE SPIRIT COINHERING AND BEING INSEPARABLE

The relationship among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit of the Trinity is not only that they simultaneously coexist, but, even more, that they indwell one another mutually. Coexistence means to exist together at the

same time. Coinherence, as applied to the Trinity, means that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are in one another and thus exist together.

The Scriptures clearly indicate that when the Son comes, the Father comes with Him, similarly, when the Spirit comes, both the Son and the Father come with Him. Furthermore, when the Son comes, the Father does not come with Him outwardly; rather, the Father comes with Him inwardly and subjectively.

John 14:10 says, "I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me." This indicates that the Father does not come with the Son outwardly, rather, He comes in the Son.

Furthermore, John 8:29 says, "He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone." Luke 4:1 also says, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit…" These verses prove that when the Son is living on earth, both the Father and the Spirit are with Him, the Three are inseparable.

The Triune God has never been separated. When One moves, the other Two also move with Him. When One is sent, the other Two also come with Him. When the Son comes, He comes in the name of the Father; when He comes, the Father comes. When the Spirit is sent, He is sent in the name of the Son, His being sent is the Son's being sent. Hence, the Son's coming is the Father's coming, and the Spirit's being sent is the Son's being sent. The Three—the Father, Son, and Spirit—are one. They cannot be separated for eternity.

THE THREE—THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE SPIRIT—BEING ONE

The Son Being the Father

Isaiah 9:6 says, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given… and his name shall be called… The mighty God, The everlasting Father." In this verse, the mighty God matches the child, and the everlasting Father matches the Son. Yes, He is a child, yet He is the mighty God. The child who was born in the manger of Bethlehem was the mighty God. Just as the child

and the mighty God are one, so also the Son and the everlasting Father are one. The Son is the eternal Father. It is indeed difficult to fully explain this matter, yet the Scriptures have said so.

The Son (the Last Adam) Becoming the Life-Giving Spirit

First Corinthians 15:45 states, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." The last Adam, of course, is the incarnated Lord Jesus, and the life-giving Spirit, of course, is the Holy Spirit. There can never be another life-giving Spirit besides the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this verse also tells us clearly that the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit. The Lord was made flesh and became the last Adam, and later, after death and resurrection, He became the life-giving Spirit. The words spoken by the Lord in John 14:16-20 also confirm this point. Here the Lord tells us that He will pass through death and resurrection to become another Comforter, that is, the Spirit of reality, who will come to abide with us and dwell in us. In verse 17, the Lord says that the Spirit of reality "abides with you and shall be in you."

The Lord (the Son) Being the Spirit

Second Corinthians 3:17 says, "And the Lord is the Spirit." The "Lord" spoken of here, of course, is the Lord Jesus, and the Spirit, of course, is the Holy Spirit. Does this not clearly and definitely tell us that the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit? Our Lord is the Holy Spirit. He is the Father, and He is also the Spirit. He is everything!

THE REASON FOR GOD TO BE TRIUNE

Second Corinthians 13:14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Here three things are mentioned: grace, love, and fellowship. This sets forth the reason why God is triune: it is thus that He can dispense Himself into us, work Himself into us for us to enjoy, and be our all. The love of God, that is, the love of the Father, is the source. The grace of Christ, that is, the grace of

the Son, is the flowing out of the love of the Father. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the flowing into us of the grace of the Son, together with the love of the Father, for us to enjoy. This can be confirmed by our experience. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit within us is the transmitting of the grace of the Son into us. And the grace of the Son within us is simply the practical tasting and enjoying of the love of the Father. The love of the Father is the source, the grace of the Son is the expression, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the transmission, transmitting the grace of the Son, with the love of the Father, into us. The result is that everything that is of the Three —the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—becomes the enjoyment within you, and the more you live in this fellowship, the more you will have of the grace of Christ; then, the more you have of the grace of Christ, the more you will enjoy the love of God. Therefore, the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are not three different things, but three aspects of one thing for us to possess and enjoy. Likewise, the Father, Son, and Spirit are not three Gods, but one God with the aspect of three for us to possess and enjoy. (Truth Lessons, Level One, Vol. 1, Chapter 2)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, explain why God is one but has the aspect of three.

2. According to the Bible, prove that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit coexist from eternity to eternity.

3. According to the Bible, prove that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit coinhere and are inseparable.

4. According to the Bible, prove that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one.

5. What is the reason for God being triune?

LESSON SIX

THE ESSENTIAL TRINITY

AND THE ECONOMICAL TRINITY

Scripture Reading:

Isa. 9:6 For a child is born to us, A son is given to us; And the government Is upon His shoulder; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

1 Cor. 15:45b …The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Matt. 3:16-17 And having been baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him. And behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight.

Hymn: 7

OUTLINE

I. The two main aspects of the divine Trinity:

A. The essential Trinity refers to the essence of the Triune God for His existence.

B. The economical Trinity refer to His plan for His move.

C. In the essential Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit coexist and coinhere at the same time and in the same way with no succession. There is no first, second, or third.

D. In God's plan, in God's administrative arrangement, in God's economy, the Father takes the first step, the Son takes the second step, and the Spirit takes the third step. The Father planned, the Son accomplished, and the Spirit applies what the Son accomplished according to the Father's plan. This is a successive procedure or a succession in God's economy to carry out His eternal purpose.

II. The aspect of the essential Trinity—the Son being the

embodiment of the Father, the Spirit being the reality of the Son—Col. 2:9; John 14:16-18:

Col. 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever,

John 14:17 Even 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.

John 14:18 I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.

A. A son is given to us, yet His name is called the eternal Father—Isa. 9:6.

Isa. 9:6 For a child is born to us, A son is given to us; And the government Is upon His shoulder; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

B. The Son as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b.

1 Cor. 15:45b …The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

C. The Lord is the Spirit and the Lord Spirit—2 Cor. 3:17-18.

2 Cor. 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

D. Such words in the Scripture are strong evidence that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are essentially one.

III. The aspect of the economical Trinity—the Father is the Originator, making the divine economy; then the Son accomplishes the divine economy made by the Father; and the Spirit applies to God's elect what the Son has accomplished—Eph. 1:9-10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4b; John 5:19; 8:28; 16:13; 10:30; 17:21, 23.

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph. 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all

things.

1 Tim. 1:4b Which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

John 5:19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

John 8:28 Jesus therefore said to them, When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am, and that I do nothing from Myself, but as My Father has taught Me, I speak these things.

John 16:13 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.

John 10:30 I and the Father are one.

John 17:21 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 17:23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.

A. The Father spoke in heaven concerning the Son, the Son stood in the water on the earth, and the Spirit soared as the dove in the air—Matt. 3:16-17.

Matt. 3:16 And having been baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him.

Matt. 3:17 And behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight.

B. The Father chose the believers before the foundation of the world in eternity past, the Son redeemed them in time, and the Spirit seals them after they believe in the Son—Eph. 1:4, 6-7, 13.

Eph. 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love.

Eph. 1:6 To the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved;

Eph. 1:7 In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace.

Eph. 1:13 In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise.

C. Words like these in the Scripture are strong evidence that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are economically three. Thus, God's elect participate in what the Triune God has done and enjoy Their work with Themselves for their satisfaction.

REFERENCE

Elders Training, Book 3, Ch. 7; Crystallization-study of John, Ch. 3.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE ESSENTIAL TRINITY AND THE ECONOMICAL TRINITY

The two main aspects concerning the divine Trinity are essential Trinity and the economical Trinity. In the essential Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit coexist and coinhere at the same time and in the same way with no succession. There is no first, second, or third. However, In God's plan, in God's administrative arrangement, in God's economy, the Father takes the first step, the Son takes the second step, and the Spirit takes the third step. The Father planned, the Son accomplished, and the Spirit applies what the Son accomplished according to the Father's plan. This is a successive procedure or a succession in God's economy to carry out His eternal purpose. The essential Trinity refers to the essence of the Triune God for His existence; the economical Trinity refers to His plan for His move. There is the need of the existence of the divine Trinity, and there is also the need of the plan of the divine Trinity.

In essence, the three of the Godhead exist equally at the same time and coinhere equally at the same time from eternity to eternity.

The Father's Plan

God, the Triune God, has a purpose, so He made a plan. He made an administrative arrangement to carry out His purpose, so He has an

economy. In this economy the three of the Godhead are in succession. This is economical, not essential. Furthermore, to carry out the plan there is the need of much work. The Father accomplished the first step of the plan, of the economy. He worked in choosing us and in predestinating us. The work of selection and the work of predestination were done by the Father, not by the Son or by the Spirit. We must be careful, though, to realize that the Father did the selection and the predestinating in the Son and with the Spirit. If we say that the Father chose us and selected us alone, we jeopardize the coinherence and the coexistence of the divine Trinity. The coinherence and the coexistence of the Triune God are from eternity to eternity.

The Son's Accomplishment

After the plan was made, there was the need for the Son to come to carry out the plan. The Son came to be incarnated, to be flesh, to be a man. He came to live a human life for thirty-three and a half years, to die an all-inclusive death, and to resurrect from the dead. The Son came to do all the works, but He did not do these works alone. He did them with the Father and by the Spirit. The Son came to do His all-inclusive redemptive work, which includes incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection, with the Father and by the Spirit. If the Son had come by Himself alone, this again would have jeopardized the coexistence and the coinherence, the essence, of the divine Trinity.

The Spirit's Application

After the accomplishment there was the need and there still is the need of application. In this third step of application more fine works are needed. In the first step the Father had only to make a plan. In the second step, the Son had to accomplish the plan with much work. The Spirit's application in the third step needs a great deal of continuous work. We need the Spirit to lead us and to guide us not only day by day but also minute by minute in all the details of our daily life. The Spirit needs to be applied in your talk to

your wife and even in your attitude. We can see how fine and how detailed is the work to carry out this application. The Spirit is doing this application work not alone by Himself, but as the Son with the Father. Otherwise, this application would also jeopardize the divine existence of the Trinity.

In the work of the Father's plan we can say that the Father did the works in the Son and with the Spirit, but we cannot say that the Son did that work with the Father and by the Spirit. Neither can we say that the Spirit did the works of the plan as the Son, with the Father. Also, in the second step of God's economy, the step of accomplishment, the Son did all the works. We cannot say the Father did the accomplishing work with the Son and by the Spirit. Neither can we say that the Spirit accomplished the Father's plan as the Son, with the Father. We can only say that the Son did all the works to accomplish the Father's plan with the Father and by the Spirit. Also, we cannot say that the Father became flesh and that the Father lived on this earth in the flesh. Furthermore, we cannot say that the Father went to the cross and died for our redemption, and we cannot say the blood shed on the cross is the blood of Jesus the Father. We must day that the blood was shed by Jesus the Son God (1 John 1:7). We can neither say that the Father died on the cross nor can we say that the Father resurrected from the dead.

In the third step of God's economy, the step of the Spirit, all the works were surely done by the Spirit. In the third step, however, the Son became the Spirit. Therefore, whatever kind of work is done by the Spirit is the work done by the Son as the Spirit. In the third step, all the works are done by the Spirit as the Son with the Father. We cannot say, though, that all the works in the third step are done by the Father with the Son through the Spirit. We need a sober mind to see this. In the third step all the works are done by the Spirit as the Son with the Father. We can also say that all the works in the third step are done by the Son as the Spirit with the Father because after the second step was accomplished, the Son as the Accomplisher, with the Father, became the Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit is the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God in His economy. Every work that is done by the Spirit is done by the Son as the Spirit with

the Father. (Elders Training, Book 3, pp. 68-71)

THE ASPECT OF THE ESSENTIAL TRINITY

According to Their essence, the three are one; thus, there is the aspect of the essential Trinity. The Son is the embodiment of the Father (Col. 2:9), and the Spirit is the reality of the Son (John 14:16-18).

The Son Being Called the Father

A son is given to us, yet His name is called the eternal Father (Isa. 9:6).

The Son Becoming the Life-giving Spirit

The Son as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). He was incarnated to be the flesh. He was the last Adam. That means that after Him, there would be no flesh. He was the ending, the closing, the concluding, of the flesh. This One in resurrection became the life-giving Spirit. Thus, this One, the Son, is the Father and eventually He is the Spirit. In 1934 Brother Nee gave a conference on the all-inclusive Christ. He said that Christ, the all-inclusive One, is the centrality and universality of God. He is the Son, yet He is the Father. He is the Son, yet He is the life-giving Spirit. Thus, He is the centrality and universality of the Triune God.

The Lord Being the Spirit

The Lord is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17) and the Lord Spirit (v. 18). The Lord Spirit is a compound divine title like the Father God. He is both the Lord and the Spirit. They two are one in Him.

The Evidence That the Father, the Son, and the Spirit Are Essentially One

Such words in the Scripture are strong evidence that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are essentially one.

THE ASPECT OF THE ECONOMICAL TRINITY

When we speak of the Triune God according to His economy, we are speaking of Him according to His moving and acting, not His essence. According to the economy, the three are three; thus, there is the aspect of the economical Trinity. The Father is the Originator, making the divine economy (Eph. 1:9-10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4b); then the Son accomplishes the divine economy made by the Father (John 5:19; 8:28); and the Spirit applies to God's elect what the Son has accomplished (16:13). These are steps of one complete move. God the Father planned to do something; the Son accomplished the plan; the Spirit applies to us what the Son has accomplished. They are still one in harmony in the economical Trinity (10:30; 17:21, 23).

The Father in Heaven, the Son on the Earth, and the Spirit in the Air

The Father spoke in heaven concerning the Son, the Son stood in the water on the earth, and the Spirit soared as the dove in the air (Matt. 3:16-17). The three of the Trinity here are in three locations. Christ the Son, after His baptism, was standing in the water, and the Father said, "This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight." Then the Spirit as a dove soaring in the air descended upon Him. The Father as the source must be in heaven, the Son in His incarnation as the course must be on the earth, and the Spirit as the flow must be soaring in the air.

This is different from the view of the Triune God in John 14. In John 10:30 the Lord said, "I and the Father are one." He did not say, "I am one with the Father." We can say that we are one with one another. But the Lord Jesus and the Father, They two, are one. In John there is the mystical view that the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. No doubt, They are also in the Spirit and the Spirit is in them. This is essential.

The Father Choosing, the Son Redeeming, and the Spirit Sealing

The Father chose the believers before the foundation of the world in eternity past, the Son redeemed them in time, and the Spirit seals them

after they believe in the Son (Eph. 1:4; 6-7, 13).

The Evidence That the Father, the Son, and the Spirit Are Economically Three

Words like these in the Scripture are strong evidence that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are economically three. Thus, God's elect participate in what the Triune God has done and enjoy Their work with Themselves for their satisfaction. By God acting economically, we can participate in what He is and what He has worked out for our pleasure and satisfaction. (Crystallization-study of John, pp. 37-39)

QUESTIONS

1. What are the two main aspects of the Divine Trinity?
2. Describe briefly the essential aspect of the Divine Trinity.
3. Describe briefly the economical aspect of the Divine Trinity.

LESSON SEVEN

THE TITLES AND PERSON OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading:

Matt. 1:21 And she will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.

Matt. 1:16 And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Matt. 1:23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel (which is translated, God with us).

Rom. 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and out of whom, as regards what is according to flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

Hymn: 68

OUTLINE

I. The sacred titles of Christ:

A. Jesus—Matt. 1:21.

B. Christ—Matt. 1:16b.

C. Emmanuel—Matt. 1:23.

II. The person of Christ:

A. God—Rom. 9:5.

B. The Son of God—John 20:31.

John 20:31 But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His name.

C. Man—1 Tim. 2:5, 3:16.

1 Tim. 2:5 For there is one God and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

1 Tim. 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

D. The Creator—Heb. 1:10.

Heb. 1:10 And, "You in the beginning, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands;

E. The Firstborn of All Creation—Col. 1:15.

Col. 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation.

F. The Word that was in the beginning with God—John 1:1-2.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

G. The expression of the Father—John 1:18.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

REFERENCE

Life Lessons, Vol. 1, Lsn. 8; Truth Lessons, Level 1, Vol. 2, Lsn. 18.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE SACRED TITLES OF CHRIST

Jesus

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins"(Matt. 1:21). When Christ was incarnated to be a man, He was given the name Jesus by an angel. Jesus is equivalent to Joshua in Hebrew (Num. 13:16), which means the salvation of Jehovah, or Jehovah the Savior. Thus, He is the Savior, who will save His people from their sins.

Christ

"Mary, of whom was born Jesus, Who is called Christ" (Matt. 1:16). The second name of Christ is Christ, the equivalent of Messiah in Hebrew (John 1:41), which means the anointed One. This name reveals that He is God's

anointed One, being anointed by God with His Spirit to create and to redeem in order to fulfill God's eternal purpose.

Emmanuel

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). Jesus and Christ were names given by God. When men discovered that He was God, they called Him Emmanuel, which means God with us. This name reveals that Jesus, who is our Savior, and Christ, who is God's Anointed, are actually God Himself coming to be with us.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

God

"Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5). This word simply and strongly declares that Christ is God, who is over all, the complete God blessed forever.

The Son of God

"But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:3). We have already seen how God has the aspects of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. All Three-God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit-are God, even the one unique God. Since Christ is God, He is not only God the Father, but also God the Son, that is, the Son of God.

Man

"In the beginning was the Word…and the Word was God… And the Word became flesh" (John 1:1, 14). "The Man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). "And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness, who was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). The three portions of the Word above clearly tell us that Jesus Christ, who is God, became flesh to be a perfect man with a human body and human nature. Therefore, He is God manifested in the

flesh. He is God and He is man, a God-man, possessing both the divine and the human natures. As to His divine nature, He is completely God; as to His human nature, He is perfectly man. This is a great mystery.

The Creator

"You in the beginning, Lord, have founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands" (Heb. 1:1). This tells us that Christ is also the Creator.

The Firstborn of All Creation

"Who [the Son of His love] is the …Firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15). This tells us that Christ is also a creature, even the Firstborn among the creatures. As the Firstborn, He is the first. As God, He is the Creator of heaven and earth and all things; as man, He is the first among the creatures. (Life Lesson, Lesson Eight, pp. 53-55)

The Word That Was in the Beginning with God

John 1:1-2 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." The Word is Christ (John 1:14). From the beginning Christ was the Word that was with God He is without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life (Heb. 7:3). His deity is eternal. He was with God from the beginning. He is the Word that was in the beginning with God. (Truth Lessons, Level one, Vol. 2, p.83)

The Expression of the Father

Christ, the only begotten Son of God, expressed God by the Word, life, light, grace, and reality, as revealed in John 1:1, 4, 5, and 14. The Word is God revealed, life is God imparted, light is God shining, grace is God enjoyed, and reality is God realized, apprehended. The essence of them all is God Himself. It is by these things that God is fully declared in the Son. Although no one has ever seen God, the Son of God has declared, expressed,

Him in the way of being the Word, life, light, grace, and reality. (Truth Lessons, Level one, Vol. 2, p.84)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, list out the three sacred titles of Christ and their meanings.

2. According to the Bible, explain the Person of Christ.

LESSON EIGHT

THE WORK OF CHRIST (1)

Scripture Reading:

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

Heb. 2:14 Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil.

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.

Hymn: 190

OUTLINE

I. Creating—He is the Creator of all things—Rev. 4:11; Col. 1:16.

Rev. 4:11 You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created.

Col. 1:16 Because in Him all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and unto Him.

II. Becoming flesh—John 1:14:

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

A. To bring God into man by having God incarnated to be a man in the flesh—Gen. 3:15, 22:18; 2 Sam. 7:12-14; Isa. 7:14, 9:6; Micah 5:2.

Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman And between your seed and her seed; He will bruise you on the head, But you will bruise him on the heel.

Gen. 22:18 And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because

you have obeyed My voice.

2 Sam. 7:12 When your days are fulfilled and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, which will come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

2 Sam. 7:13 It is he who will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

2 Sam. 7:14 I will be his Father, and he will be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will strike him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the sons of men.

Isa. 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.

Isa. 9:6 For a child is born to us, A son is given to us; And the government Is upon His shoulder; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Micah 5:2 (But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, So little to be among the thousands of Judah, From you there will come forth to Me He who is to be Ruler in Israel; And His goings forth are from ancient times, From the days of eternity.)

B. To mingle divinity with humanity.

C. To be born of the divine Spirit and of a human virgin—Matt. 1:20.

Matt. 1:20 But while he pondered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit.

D. To produce a God-man—Emmanuel (Matt. 1:23), as the prototype for the mass reproduction of many God-men.

Matt. 1:23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel (which is translated, God with us).

III. Passing through human living for thirty-three and a half years:

A. By living a human life to express the divine attributes as human virtues, thus expressing God in humanity.

B. By living a crucified human life to express the divine life.

C. To set up a model for the many upcoming God-men—being crucified to live that God might be expressed through humanity.

IV. Crucified on the cross—accomplishing the all-inclusive death:

A. Crucifying the flesh of sin—Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:3b.

Gal. 5:24 But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its

passions and its lusts.

Rom. 8:3 For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

B. Condemning sin (sin is in the flesh [Rom. 7:18] and Christ was made sin by becoming the flesh of sin in its likeness [2 Cor. 5:21a]) and taking away sin including sins) by shedding the blooding—Rom. 8:3b; John 1:29; Heb. 9:26b, 28; John 19:34b. (Note: God as righteousness is embodied in Christ; Satan as sin is embodied in the flesh.)

Rom. 7:18 For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not.

2 Cor. 5:21a Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf…

Rom. 8:3b God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

Heb. 9:26b But now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested for the putting away of sin through the sacrifice of Himself.

Heb. 9:28a So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many.

John 19:34b …And immediately there came out blood and water.

C. Destroying the devil, who has the might of death and who is related to the flesh of man—Heb. 2:14; John 12:31b.

Heb. 2:14 Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil.

John 12:31b Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.

D. Judging the world and casting out its ruler, the devil—John 12:31; Gal. 6:14b.

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.

Gal. 6:14b …Through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

E. Crucifying the old man—Rom. 6:6 Gal. 2:20a, 6:14b.

Rom. 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves.

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ.

Gal. 6:14b Through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

F. Terminating the old creation by the crucifixion of the old man—Rom. 6:6.

Rom. 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves.

G. Abolishing the law of the commandments in ordinances—Eph. 2:15a.

Eph. 2:15a Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances.

H. Releasing the divine life from the one grain into many grains, signified by the flowing of water at the death of Christ—John 12:24; 19:34b.

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.

John 19:34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.

V. The all-conquering resurrection:

A. Producing the firstborn Son of God by uplifting the humanity of Christ into His divinity and by having Christ born of God (Acts 13:33; Psa. 2:7), that is, by designating the seed of David by the divinity (the Spirit of holiness) of Christ in the power of resurrection to be the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 1:4; 8:29; Heb. 1:3-6.

Acts 13:33 That God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, "You are My Son; this day have I begotten You."

Psa. 2:7 I will recount the decree of Jehovah; He said to Me: You are My Son; Today I have begotten You.

Rom. 1:4 Who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

Heb. 1:3 Who, being the effulgence of His glory and the impress of His substance and upholding and bearing all things by the word of His power, having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Heb. 1:4 Having become as much better than the angels as to have inherited a more distinguished name than they.

Heb. 1:5 For to which of the angels has He ever said, "You are My Son; this day have I begotten You"? And again, "I will be a Father to Him, and He will be a Son to Me"?

Heb. 1:6 And when He brings again the Firstborn into the inhabited earth, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."

B. Regenerating all of God's chosen people to be the many sons of God and the many brothers of the firstborn Son of God—the resurrected God-man, Christ—1 Pet. 1:3; Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:29.

1 Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Heb. 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

C. Consummating the Spirit of God to be the life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b:

1 Cor. 15:45b ...The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

1. The Spirit of Christ—the pneumatic Christ, the pnuematized Christ—Rom. 8:9.

Rom. 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.

2. The ultimate consummation of the processed and consummated Triune God, who is embodied in the pneumatized Christ realized as the life-giving Spirit.

3. The reality of resurrection, which is Christ Himself and the processed and consummated Triune God—John 11:25; 1 John 5:6.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live.

1 John 5:6 This is He who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood; and the Spirit is He who testifies, because the Spirit is the reality.

REFERENCE

Life Lessons, Level 1, Lsn. 8; The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 3, Msg. 63; The Practical Way to Live a Life According to the High Peak of the Divine Revelation in the Holy Scriptures, Ch. 1.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

CREATING—HE IS THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS

Since God is the Creator of all things and since Christ is God, Christ is the Creator of all things. Hebrews 1:10, a quotation from Psalm 102:25, is applied to Christ and indicated that, as God, Christ created the heavens and the earth: "You in the beginning, Lord, have founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands." As the Creator of the heavens and the earth, Christ is the origination and the source of all the created things. This proves that He is the very God who is over all and is blessed forever (Rom. 9:5b). His creation of the heavens and of the earth began the fulfillment of God's eternal plan to carry out God's intention to have a full expression in man in the universe. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 3, Msg. 63, p. 675)

BECOMING FLESH

To Bring God Into Man By Having God Incarnated To Be A Man In The Flesh

God's incarnation (John 1:14) was clearly promised and prophesied in the Old Testament. …In Gen 3:15 God promised the fallen Adam that a seed of the woman would come to bruise the head of the evil serpent, who seduced Adam to fall. …This seed of the woman is Christ. …In Gen 22:18 God promised Abraham that his seed would be the blessing to all the nations on earth. Abraham's seed is Christ (Gal. 3:16). In 2 Samuel 7:12-14 God promised David that his seed, a human being, would be the Son of God

to build God's temple and to sit on the throne in God's kingdom. This seed is also Christ.

Isaiah prophesies that a virgin would be with child and bear a son. Isaiah 7:14 says that this virgin's child would be called Emmanuel, God with us. Isaiah 9:6 says that unto us a child is born and a son is given, yet His name shall be called the Mighty God, the Eternal Father. Micah 5:2 prophesied that a ruler would come forth from Bethlehem whose goings forth are from of old, from the days of eternity.

These are the prophecies concerning Christ. In total, all these promises and prophecies indicated that one day God would come to be a man, to bring Himself into man.

To Mingle Divinity with Humanity

God's becoming a man means that God mingles divinity with humanity, making God and man, divinity and humanity, one entity.

Conceived of the Divine Spirit and Was Born of A Human Virgin

Christ was conceived of the divine Spirit and was born of a human virgin (Matt. 1:20).

To Produce a God-man

The birth of Christ produced a God-man—Emmanuel (Matt. 1:23)—as the prototype for the mass reproduction of many God-men. God became Jesus. That means God became a God-man. This God-man is a prototype to reproduce millions of God-men. If you realize that you are a God-man, you will conduct yourself in your daily life in a way of dignity. When you go shopping to buy food or in anything you do in your practical affairs, you should consider yourself a God-man. Then your attitude and the way that you talk will be full of dignity. Even a mayor of a small city does things with his dignity. Today you are a God-man, who should live a life fully dignified, with the highest standard of human virtues expressing the most excellent

divine attributes.

PASSING THROUGH HUMAN LIVING FOR THIRTY-THREE AND A HALF YEARS

The second great accomplishment of the processed and consummated Triune God was His passing through human living for thirty-three and a half years.

By Living a Human Life to Express the Divine Attributes as Human Virtues

One day God became a man on this earth. Then this God-man lived a human life on earth to express not anything human but the divine attributes as human virtues, thus expressing God in humanity.

By Living A Crucified Human Life To Express The Divine Life

Christ passed through human living by living a crucified human life to express the divine life. Today we are the reproduction of this prototype. We are the God-men. We need to realize that our living must be a crucified living. We should always put our human life to death. This is to crucify our human life. This is for the purpose of expressing the divine life. Our human life has to be crucified so that the divine life, which is ours also, can expressed. In this way we are dying to live, that is, we are dying to ourselves to live to God.

To Set Up A Model For The Many Upcoming God-Men, That God Might Be Expressed Through Humanity

The processed and consummated Triune God passed through human living to set up a model for the many upcoming God-men-being crucified to live that God might be expressed through humanity. This is clearly unveiled in 1 Pet. 2:21, which tells us that Christ in His human living left us a model, an example, for us to copy. Christ Jesus, while He was on this earth, set up a

copy for spiritual Xeroxing. He was the model, the copy, for Xeroxing, to produce millions of copies.

CRUCIFIED ON THE CROSS— ACCOMPLISHING THE ALL-INCLUSIVE DEATH

Crucifying The Flesh Of Sin

On the cross Christ died an all-inclusive death. The first thing He dealt with in His death was our flesh. He crucified the flesh of sin (Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:3b).

Condemning sin

Christ condemned sin (sin is in the flesh [Rom. 7:18] and Christ was made sin by becoming the flesh of sin in its likeness [2 Cor. 5:21a]) and took away sin (including sins) by shedding His blood (Rom. 8:3b; John 1:29; Heb. 9:26b, 28a; John 19:34b). God as righteousness is embodied in Christ; Satan as sin is embodied in the flesh. God is in Christ, and Satan is in the flesh. On the cross Christ dealt with both the flesh and sin.

Destroying The Devil

In His all-inclusive death Christ destroyed the devil, who has the might of death and who is related to the flesh of sin (Heb. 2:14; John 12:31b).

Judging The World And Casting Out Its Ruler

Four things are related to one another: the flesh, sin, Satan, and the world. Christ in His death judged the world and cast out its ruler, the devil (John 12:31; Gal. 6:14b).

Crucifying The Old Man

Christ also crucified the old man (Rom. 6:6, Gal. 2:20a, 6:14b).

Terminating The Old Creation

Christ terminated the old creation by the crucifixion of the old man

(Rom. 6:6).

Abolishing The Law Of The Commandments In Ordinances

On the cross Christ abolished the law of the commandments in ordinances (Eph. 2:15a). The ordinances are the human forms or ways of living and worship. These ordinances divide people, so Christ abolished them in His death.

Releasing The Divine Life

In Christ's death He dealt with seven negative points: the flesh, sin, Satan, the world, the old man, he old creation, and the ordinances in the law. There is positive point to His death. In His death He also released the divine life from the one grain into many grains, signified by the flowing of water at the death of Christ (John 12:24; 19:34b). When He was crucified, His side was pierced and out flowed blood and water. Blood is for redemption to deal with sins for the purchasing of the church (Acts 20:28). Water is for imparting life to deal with death for the producing of the church (Eph. 5:29-30).

THE ALL-CONQUERING RESURRECTION

Producing The Firstborn Son of God

In the all-conquering resurrection the firstborn Son of God was produced. God had only one Son, the only begotten Son of God (John 1:18; 3:16). But in resurrection another kind of Son of God was produced, the firstborn Son of God. This took place in resurrection by uplifting the humanity of Christ into His divinity and by having Christ born of God (Acts 13:33; Psa. 2:7), that is, by designating the seed of David by the divinity (the Spirit of holiness) of Christ in the power of resurrection to be the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 1:4; 8:29; Heb. 1:3-6).

Regenerating All God's Chosen People

to Be the Many Sons of God

In Christ's all-conquering resurrection all of God's chosen people were regenerated to be the many sons of God and the many brothers of the firstborn Son of God-the resurrected God-men, Christ (1 Pet. 1:3; Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:29).

Consummating the Spirit of God to Be the Life-giving Spirit

Christ first became a man, and that man was born to be God's firstborn Son. Also, millions of God's chosen people were born with Him to be God's many sons. In the same resurrection, this wonderful Christ also became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). The life-giving Spirit is the Spirit of Christ-the pneumatic Christ, the pneumatized Christ (Rom. 8:9). The life-giving Spirit is also the ultimate consummation of the processed and consummated Triune God, who is embodied in the pneumatized Christ realized as the life-giving Spirit. The life-giving Spirit is the reality of resurrection, which is Christ Himself and the processed and consummated Triune God (John 11:25; 1 John 5:6). The resurrection is Christ and the consummated Triune God. And this resurrection is the Spirit.

We need to see that in the all-conquering resurrection of Christ, three major things transpired. First, the man Jesus was born to be the firstborn Son of God. Second, all His believers were born in that birth with Him to be the many sons of God. One delivery produced the firstborn Son and millions of "twins." We are the "twins" of Christ. We are His "twin" brothers, born by one delivery. Of course, He took the lead to come out, and we followed Him. First Peter 1:3 says that all the believers in Christ were regenerated through the resurrection of Christ. Third, at the time when Christ in His humanity was born to be the firstborn Son of God, He became the life-giving Spirit. (The Practical Way to Live a Life According to the High Peak of the Divine Revelation in the Holy Scriptures, pp. 13-18)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, explain the work of Christ in creation.

2. According to the Bible, explain the work of Christ in His incarnation.

3. According to the Bible, explain the work of Christ in His human living.

4. According to the Bible, explain the work of Christ in His crucifixion.

5. According to the Bible, explain the work of Christ in His all-conquering resurrection.

LESSON NINE

THE WORK OF CHRIST (2)

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 1:20-21 Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, Far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

Rom. 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Rev. 22:1-2 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Hymn: 132

OUTLINE

VI. The all-transcending ascension:

A. Christ in His ascension transcending Hades (where the dead people are being held), the earth (where the fallen man are moving against God), the air (where Satan and his power of darkness are acting against God), and all the heavens (where Satan can go)—Eph. 1:20-21; 4:8-10; Heb. 4:14; 7:26.

Eph. 1:20 Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,

Eph. 1:21 Far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

Eph. 4:8 Therefore the Scripture says, “Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men.”

Eph. 4:9 (Now this, “He ascended,” what is it except that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?

Eph. 4:10 He who descended, He is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.)

Heb. 4:14 Having therefore a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession.

Heb. 7:26 For such a High Priest was also fitting to us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners and having become higher than the heavens.

B. To be transmitted into the church, which is the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all—Eph. 1:22-23.

Eph. 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

C. To be the Head of the Body, the church, having the first place in all things—Col. 1:18.

Col. 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

VII. Minister His heavenly ministry:

A. To be made:

1. Both Lord and Christ—Acts 2:36.

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.

2. Leader (of all the kings) and Savior—Acts 5:31.

Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

B. To be our High Priest in God's New Testament economy—Heb. 4:14; 7:26; 9:11.

Heb. 4:14 Having therefore a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession.

Heb. 7:26 For such a High Priest was also fitting to us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners and having become higher than the heavens.

Heb. 9:11 But Christ, having come as a High Priest of the good things that have come into being, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not of this creation.

C. To be the Mediator of the new covenant—Heb. 9:15.

Heb. 9:15 And because of this He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that, death

having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

D. To be the surety of the better covenant—Heb. 7:22.

Heb. 7:22 By so much Jesus has also become the surety of a better covenant.

E. To be the Minister in the heavenly Holy of Holies—Heb. 8:2.

Heb. 8:2 A Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

F. To be the Paraclete (Advocate) of the New Testament believers—1 John 2:1; John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7.

1 John 2:1 My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever.

John 14:26 But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and remind you of all the things which I have said to you.

John 15:26 But when the Comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of reality, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify concerning Me;

John 16:7 But 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.

G. To be the New Testament believers' Intercessor at the right hand of God and within them as well—Rom. 8:34, 26.

Rom. 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Rom. 8:26 Moreover, in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

VIII. Coming again:

A. First coming secretly from heaven to the air—Matt. 24:44; Rev. 10:1.

Matt. 24:42 Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes.

Rev. 10:1 And I saw another strong Angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon His head, and His face was like the sun, and His feet like pillars of fire.

B. Then coming openly from the air to the earth—Matt. 24:27, 30.

Matt. 24:27 For just as the lightning comes forth from the east and shines to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Matt. 24:30 And at that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

C. Dealing with the four groups of people on earth today:

1. Will receive believers up to the air to judge them, rewarding the overcomers and punishing the defeated ones—2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10.

2 Cor. 5:10 For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad.

Rom. 14:10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

2. Will destroy the religious system of Roman Catholicism and Christianity—Rev. 17:16; Matt. 13:30, 39-42.

Rev. 17:16 And the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked and will eat her flesh and burn her utterly with fire.

Matt. 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Collect first the tares and bind them into bundles to burn them up, but the wheat gather into my barn.

Matt. 13:39 And the enemy who sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is the consummation of the age; and the reapers are angels.

Matt. 13:40 Therefore just as the tares are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the consummation of the age.

Matt. 13:41 The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will collect out of His kingdom all the stumbling blocks and those who practice lawlessness,

Matt. 13:42 And will cast them into the furnace of fire. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

3. Will save the people of Israel, the Jews—Zech. 14:1-5, 12-14; 12:10; Rom. 11:25-26.

Zech. 14:1 Indeed a day is coming for Jehovah when the spoil taken from you will

be divided among you.

Zech. 14:2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city will be captured, and the houses plundered, and the women ravished; and half of the city will go forth into captivity, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.

Zech. 14:3 Then Jehovah will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights in a day of battle.

Zech. 14:4 And His feet will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split at its middle toward the east and toward the west into a very great valley, so that half of the mountain will remove to the north and half of it to the south.

Zech. 14:5 And you will flee into the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach unto Azel; yes, you will flee, just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah the king of Judah. And Jehovah my God will come, and all the saints with Him.

Zech. 14:12 And this will be the plague with which Jehovah will strike all the peoples who have fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are standing on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth.

Zech. 14:13 And in that day a great panic from Jehovah will be among them; and each will seize his neighbor's hand, and his hand will rise up against his neighbor's hand.

Zech. 14:14 And Judah will also fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered together, gold and silver and garments, in great abundance.

Zech. 12:10 And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications; and they will look upon Me, whom they have pierced; and they will wail over Him with wailing as for an only son and cry bitterly over Him with bitter crying as for a firstborn son.

Rom. 11:25 For I do not want you, brothers, to be ignorant of this mystery (lest you be wise in yourselves), that hardness has come upon Israel in part, until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in;

Rom. 11:26 And thus all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come out of Zion; He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

4. Destroys Antichrist, who opposes God and persecutes God's people, and the armies of the nations who join him in doing evil, He will sit on His throne of glory to judge all the remaining Gentiles of the nations—Matt. 25:31-46.

Matt. 25:31 But when the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him, at that time He will sit on the throne of His glory.

Matt. 25:32 And all the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them from one another, just as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Matt. 25:33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand and the goats on the left.

Matt. 25:34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Matt. 25:35 For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me a drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in,

Matt. 25:36 Naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.

Matt. 25:37 Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, Lord, when have we seen You hungry and have fed You, or thirsty and have given You a drink?

Matt. 25:38 And when have we seen You a stranger and have taken You in, or naked and have clothed You?

Matt. 25:39 And when have we seen You sick or in prison and have come to You?

Matt. 25:40 And the King will answer and say to them, Truly I say to you, Inasmuch as you have done it to one of these, the least of My brothers, you have done it to Me.

Matt. 25:41 Then He will say also to those on the left, Go away from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Matt. 25:42 For I was hungry and you did not give Me anything to eat; I was thirsty and you did not give Me a drink;

Matt. 25:43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in; naked and you did not clothe Me; sick and in prison, and you did not visit Me.

Matt. 25:44 Then they also will answer, saying, Lord, when have we seen You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to You?

Matt. 25:45 Then He will answer them, saying, Truly I say to you, Inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, neither have you done it to Me.

Matt. 25:46 And these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

D. Binding and imprisoning Satan—Rev. 20:1-3.

Rev. 20:1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

Rev. 20:2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years

Rev. 20:3 And cast him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be loosed for a little while.

IX. Setting up the millennial kingdom on the earth:

A. To reign in it for one thousand years with His overcoming saints —Rev. 20:4, 6.

Rev. 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and of those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

B. Purging the last rebellion of mankind, the final clearing up the rebellious poison which was injected into man by Satan—Rev. 20:7-10.

Rev. 20:7 And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison

Rev. 20:8 And will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war. Their number is like that of the sand of the sea.

Rev. 20:9 And they went up upon the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them.

Rev. 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also the beast and the false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

C. Sit on the great white throne to be the Judge of the dead human beings—Rev. 20:11-15.

Rev. 20:11 And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose face earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

Rev. 20:12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened; and another scroll was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by the things which were written in the scrolls, according to their works.

Rev. 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades

gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, each of them, according to their works.

Rev. 20:14 And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

Rev. 20:15 And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

X. His eternal future as the center of the new heaven and new earth of the New Jerusalem:

A. Being the entrance into the New Jerusalem—Rev. 21:21.

Rev. 21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

B. Being the husband of the New Jerusalem—Rev. 21:2, 9.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

C. Being the temple of the holy city—Rev. 21:22.

Rev. 21:22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

D. Being the lamp of the holy city —Rev.21:23.

Rev. 21:23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

E. Being the center of the holy city —Rev. 22:1.

Rev. 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more.

F. Being the supply of the holy city —Rev. 22:2.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

REFERENCE

Life Lessons, Level 1, Lsn. 9; The Practical Way to Live a Life According to the High Peak of the Divine Revelation in the Holy Scriptures, Ch. 1;

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EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE ALL-TRANSCENDING ASCENSION

Transcending Four Layers of Opposition

Christ in His ascension transcended Hades (where the dead people are being held), the earth (where the fallen men are moving against God), the air (where Satan and his power of darkness are acting against God), and all the heavens (where Satan can go). Christ transcended these four layers (Eph. 1:20-21, 4:8-10; Heb. 4:14, 7:26). Hades is the first layer, below the earth where the dead people are held. The earth is where the fallen men are moving against God. The air is where Satan and his power of darkness are struggling against God. The third heaven is a good place, but Satan even has a way to go to that good place (Job 1:6-12a, 2:1-6). In Christ's ascension He transcended these four layers. Today He is not only above Hades, the earth, and the air, but also above the third heaven. He is higher than all the heavens.

To Be Transmitted Into The Church

Such a transcending Christ is to be transmitted into the church, which is the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:22-23).

To Be The Head Of The Body, The Church, Having The First Place In All Things

In His ascension He is the Head of the Body, the church, having the first place in all things (Col. 1:18).

MINISTER HIS HEAVENLY MINISTRY

To Be Made Both Lord And Christ, Leader And Savior

In His ascension this One was made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36) and

the Leader (of all the kings) and Savior (5:31). If He were not the Ruler, the Leader, of all the kings, He could not be the Savior. He is the Ruler of all the kings, so He can manage the environment for all of God's chosen people to be saved. I was saved in China. If in history God had not managed the world affairs to have some saints from West go to the Far East to preach the gospel, I could never have been saved. For the British and Americans to go to my country to preach the gospel needed much work by God. That was a great management. Sometimes the management is small, but only God can carry this out to create the proper environment for people to be saved. Thus, He is the Ruler of all the kings so that He can be the Savior to save God's chosen people.

To Be Our High Priest In God's New Testament Economy

Christ is our High Priest in God's New Testament economy to bear us in the presence of God and to care for all our needs (Heb. 4:14, 7:26, 9:11).

To Be The Mediator Of The New Covenant

In His ascension Christ has become the Mediator, the Executor, of the new covenant, the new testament, which He bequeathed to us by His death (Heb. 8:6, 9:15).

To Be The Surety Of The Better Covenant

Christ is also the surety, the pledge that everything in the new covenant will be fulfilled (Heb. 7:22).

To Be The Minister In The Heavenly Holy Of Holies

Christ is the Minister in the heavenly Holy of Holies to minister heaven (which is not only a place but also a condition of life) into us that we may have the heavenly life and power to live a heavenly life on earth, as He did when He was here (Heb. 8:2).

To Be The Paraclete (Advocate) Of The New Testament Believers

In His ascension Christ is the Paraclete (Advocate) of the New Testament believers (1 John 2:1; John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7).

To Be The New Testament Believers' Intercessor At The Right Hand Of God And Within Them As Well

Chit is the New Testament believers' Intercessor at the right hand of God and within them as well (Rom. 8:34, 26). (The Practical Way to Live a Life According to the High Peak of the Divine Revelation in the Holy Scriptures, pp. 18-20)

HIS COMING AGAIN

First Coming Secretly from Heaven to the Air

At the end of the church age, before Christ will leave the height of heaven to where He has ascended, the overcoming saints will be raptured, before the great tribulation, to His throne in the heavens (Rev. 12:5-6; 14:1-4; Luke 21:36). Afterwards, Christ will descend from His heavenly throne to the air with the overcomers. This is the secret aspect of His parousia which will occur before the coming great tribulation. He will remain in the air for a period of time to accomplish three important things.

First, when Christ descends from heaven and remains in the air, He will receive up the majority of the believers who remain on earth during the great tribulation (1Thes. 4:15-17).

Second, after He receives up the believers, Christ will judge all the believers in the air before His judgment seat to reward the faithful and overcoming ones and to punish the unfaithful and defeated ones (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Third, He will marry the faithful and overcoming saints as His bride in the millennial kingdom to enjoy His marriage feast (Rev. 19:7-9).

Then Coming Openly from the Air to the Earth

After He accomplishes the above three things, Christ will descend from

the air to the earth (Matt. 24:30) with the saints as His bride. This is the open aspect of His parousia, which will occur after the great tribulation.

Dealing With The Four Groups Of People On Earth Today

First, Christ will receive up the believers. As those betrothed to Christ, the believers take Him as their Husband (2 Cor. 11:2). In His second coming …Christ will receive them up to the air to judge them, rewarding the overcomers and punishing the defeated ones. He will marry the overcoming believers who match Him, that is, the overcoming church as His bride.

Second, He will destroy the religious system of Roman Catholicism and Christianity; He will also destroy the false believers. In His second coming, Christ will first use Antichrist, who will persecute religion, to burn and destroy (Rev. 17:16) the religious system of Roman Catholicism and Christianity, which is the system of Christendom and the mysterious, great religious Babylon mentioned in Revelation 17:5. Then He will send the angels to bind all the false believers, the tares spoken in Matthew 13:25-26, into bundles and cast them into the furnace of the lake of fire (Matt. 13:30, 39-42). Thus He will become the Destroyer of the wicked and adulterous religion and of the false believers.

Third, Christ will save the people of Israel, the Jews. In Christ's second coming, Antichrist will lead the great armies of the nations to surround the people of Israel and Jerusalem to destroy them. At the very moment of peril, Christ will descend to defeat and slay Antichrist and his armies (Zech. 14:1-5, 12-14). Then the people of Israel will look to Him (Zech. 12:10), and He will be their Deliverer so that all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:25-26).

Fourth, He will judge the Gentiles. In Christ's second coming, after He destroys Antichrist, who opposes God and persecutes God's people, and the armies of the nations who join him in doing evil, …He will sit on His throne of glory to judge all the remaining Gentiles of the nations. Based upon their well-treatment or ill-treatment of God's people—the children of Israel and

the believers who remain during the great tribulation. He will separate them into two groups, the "sheep" and the "goats." The sheep will be justified and blessed and will enter into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, that is, the earthly part of the millennium, to be the people enjoying its blessings. The goats will be condemned and cursed and will go to the lake of fire to suffer eternal punishment (Matt. 25:31-46). Thus Christ will judge the inhabited earth in righteousness (Acts 17:31) before the millennial kingdom as the Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5).

Binding And Imprisoning Satan

After Christ in His second coming deals with the four groups of people on the earth, He will send an angel to bind Satan, cast him into the abyss, and shut him up for one thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3). Immediately after Satan's rebellion, God declared His judgment on him (Isa. 14:12-15). Since then God has been continuously executing His judgment (Luke 10:17-19; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 12:19, 12). Then in His second coming, Christ will further execute God's judgment pronounced on the rebellious Satan by binding and imprisoning him. After Christ removes God's rebel from the earth, He will clear up the rebellious earth that His kingdom, the kingdom of God, may come to the earth.

SETTING UP THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM ON THE EARTH

To Reign In It For One Thousand Years With His Overcoming Saints

After Christ clears up the rebellious ones on the earth, He will set up the millennial kingdom, the kingdom of God and of Him, on the cleansed earth (Rev. 20:4-6; 11:15). The "sheep" who are justified and blessed will be the people in the earthly part of the millennium, that is, the kingdom of the Son of Man (Matt. 13:41). The saved Israelites will serve as priests in the earthly part to teach the people, "the sheep," how to serve God (Zech. 8:20-23). The overcoming saints as Christ's bride will be in the heavenly

part of the millennium, that is, the kingdom of the Father (Matt. 13:43), to reign with Christ and rule over the nations as the people for one thousand years (Rev. 2: 26-27).

Purging The Last Rebellion Of Mankind

At the end of the millennium, Satan will be loosed out of his prison, the abyss. He will go out to deceive the nations, the people on the earth during the millennium, to follow him and to surround the camp pitched by the saints on earth and the city inhabited by the people of Israel, in his last struggle to rebel against God. Then fire will come down from heaven to devour them. The Devil who deceived the people will be cast into the lake of fire, where Antichrist and his false prophet also will be (Rev. 20:7-10). This is the last stage of Christ's execution of God's judgment on Satan; it is also the final clearing up of the rebellious poison which was injected into man by Satan. Thus, the purged nations may enter into the new heaven and new earth to be the blessed people of God forever.

Judging All The Dead In The Universe

In Christ's second coming, the last thing He will do is to judge all the dead, including all the dead human beings imprisoned in Hades and all the dead demons confined in the sea (Rev. 20:11-15). Thus, Christ will sit on the great white throne to be the Judge of the dead human beings (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5). At the same time, He will also judge the dead demons. After He has cast both the dead human beings and the dead demons into the lake of fire, the whole universe will be completely cleared up and new heaven and new earth may be brought in.

HIS ETERNITY FUTURE

In His second coming Christ will use nearly one thousand years to thoroughly clean up the whole universe and put it in order. Then the new heaven and new earth will be brought in, and its center will be the New Jerusalem composed of all the people redeemed by God throughout all

generations. Everything of Christ's eternal future is in the New Jerusalem.

Being the Entrance into the New Jerusalem

The coming New Jerusalem is the ultimate crystallization of the mingling of the processed Triune God with men who have been redeemed and transformed by God with the divine elements of His divine Trinity in the different dispensations of the old creation, to be an organism to express Him in eternity future. The essence of the divine nature of God the Father, who is the origin and source of everything, like the precious and pure gold, is the very substance of the divine organism. The all-inclusive, glorious Christ as the embodiment of the divine Trinity, who has passed through an all-inclusive death and has entered into a resurrection which is rich in the divine life and the life-generating power to produce a result like pearls with glory and beauty, is the entrance into the divine organism. The saints, who are regenerated and transformed with all the divine elements by the Spirit, as the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God, like the valuable and splendid precious stones, constitute the wall and the wall's foundation. Christ as the entrance into this divine organism is the key uniting factor of this divine organism. Christ as such an entrance will be completely and fully expressed in His eternity.

Being the Husband of the New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:9 refers to the New Jerusalem as the wife of the Lamb, indicating that Christ is the Husband of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2). The New Jerusalem comes out of the Lamb, who has accomplished an eternal redemption, and returns to Him to be one with Him, as Eve came out of Adam and returned to Adam to be one with him.

Being the Temple of the Holy City

Revelation 21:22 says, "And I saw no temple in it, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb." There is no temple in the New Jerusalem; the Lord God the Almighty and Christ the Lamb are its temple.

This temple, according to the original text, does not refer to the entire temple including the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies; rather, it refers to the inner temple, the Holy of Holies. This inner temple is the almighty God and Christ as the Lamb, signifying that God and Christ Themselves will be the place in which we serve God in the new heaven and new earth. The holy city as the tabernacle of God (Rev. 21:3) is for God to dwell in, and God and the Lamb as the temple are for us to dwell in (cf. Psa. 27:4; 92:13). In the new heaven and new earth, the holy city New Jerusalem will be a mutual dwelling place for both God and man for eternity.

Being the Lamp of the Holy City

Revelation 21:23 says, "And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." The glory of God illuminating the city indicates that God is the light shining in the holy city. The Lamb as the lamp shines with God as the light to illumine the city with the glory of God, and through the city He shines over the nations around it (Rev. 21:24). In the millennium the light of the sun and the moon will be intensified (Isa. 30:26). The sun and the moon will be in the new heaven and new earth, but they will not be needed in the New Jerusalem, for God, the divine light, will shine much more brightly, far above the natural light of the sun and moon. In eternity future, God as the transcendent light will shine over the entire city through the Lamb-Christ, and He will also shine out of the holy city over the nations, the citizens on the new earth. Thus, the nations will walk in the shining of the holy city.

Being the Center of the Holy City

Revelation 22:1 says, "…a river of water of life…proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." God and the Lamb are one, because God is the light and the Lamb is the lamp; the light is in the lamp, and the two are one. God and the Lamb are just one-the redeeming God. The throne of God and the Lamb is the throne of the redeeming God, the throne of the

Lamb-Christ. The river of water of life in the holy city flows as a spiral through the entire city. This indicates that the throne, out from which flows the river of water of life, is the center of the holy city; the redeeming God who sits on the throne is the Lamb-Christ, who of course will be the center of the holy city. The temple is for God's expression; the throne is for God's administration. God's throne of administration is in the temple of His expression. This indicates that in the coming eternity the Lamb-Christ will be God's Administrator in the center of the New Jerusalem, that God's expression may extend to the circumference of the holy city.

Being the Supply of the Holy City

In the preceding text we have seen that there is a river of water of life flowing as a spiral through the entire city. On this side and on that side of the river is the tree of life, signifying Christ as life, producing twelve fruits for the supply and satisfaction of the entire city (Rev. 22:2)-all the redeemed ones throughout all generations. This portrays how the processed Triune God-God, the Lamb, and the Spirit, symbolized by the water of life-dispenses Himself as the immeasurable One, embodied in the all-inclusive Christ, to His redeemed under His headship to be their supply and satisfaction unto eternity.

Furthermore, the leaves of the tree of life, which tree signifies Christ, will be for the healing of the restored nations, who will be God's people forever on the new earth (Rev. 22:2), to enable them to live forever. (Truth Lessons, Level 1, Vol. 2, pp. 112-11)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, explain the work of Christ in His all-transcending ascension.

2. According to the Bible, explain the work of Christ in His heavenly ministry.

3. According to the Bible, explain the work of Christ in His second coming.

4. According to the Bible, explain what Christ will be in the New Jerusalem in the new heavens and new earth for eternity.

LESSON TEN

WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS (1)

Scripture Reading:

Gen. 1:2 But the earth became waste and emptiness, and darkness was on the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was brooding upon the surface of the waters.

Matt. 1:18 Now the origin of Jesus Christ was in this way: His mother, Mary, after she had been engaged to Joseph, before they came together, was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit.

Phil. 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

John 7:39 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.

Hymn: 242

OUTLINE

I. In the Old Testament:

A. Being the Spirit of God in God's creation of the universe—Gen. 1:2.

B. Being the Spirit of Jehovah in God's reaching of men and in His care for men—Judg. 3:10, 6:34; Gen. 6:3a.

Judg. 3:10 And the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him, and he judged Israel. And he went out to battle, and Jehovah delivered Cushan-rishathaim the king of Aram into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

Judg. 6:34 And the Spirit of Jehovah clothed Gideon; and he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called up behind him.

Gen. 6:3a And Jehovah said, My Spirit will not strive with man forever, for he indeed is flesh…

C. Being the Spirit of holiness in God's making His chosen people holy unto Himself—Psa. 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11.

Psa. 51:11 Do not cast me from Your presence, And do not take the Spirit of Your holiness away from me.

Isa. 63:10 But they rebelled and grieved His Spirit of holiness; Therefore He turned to become their enemy; He fought against them.

Isa. 63:11 Then He remembered the days of old, Moses and His people: Where is He who brought them up out of the sea With the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put in their midst His Spirit of holiness.

II. In the New Testament:

A. Being the Holy Spirit:

1. In the conception of John the Baptist to introduce God's becoming a man in His incarnation—Luke 1:13-17.

Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zachariah, because your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

Luke 1:14 And you will have joy and exultation, and many will rejoice at his birth.

Luke 1:15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall by no means drink wine and liquor. And he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb,

Luke 1:16 And many of the sons of Israel he will turn to the Lord their God.

Luke 1:17 And it is he who will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the prudence of the righteous, to prepare for the Lord a people made ready.

2. In the conception of Jesus in God's incarnation to be a man in the flesh—Luke 1:30-36; Matt. 1:18-20.

Luke 1:30 And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found grace with God.

Luke 1:31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus.

Luke 1:32 He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of David His father,

Luke 1:33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.

Luke 1:34 But Mary said to the angel, How will this be, since I have not known a man?

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore also the holy thing which is born will be called the Son of God.

Luke 1:36 And behold, Elizabeth your relative, she also has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who is called barren,

Matt. 1:18 Now the origin of Jesus Christ was in this way: His mother, Mary, after

she had been engaged to Joseph, before they came together, was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 1:19 And Joseph her husband, being righteous and not willing to disgrace her openly, intended to send her away secretly.

Matt. 1:20 But while he pondered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit.

B. Being the Spirit:

1. With whom Jesus was anointed and who was in the move of the man Jesus in His ministry to God on the earth—Mark 1:10, 12; Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1, 18; John 1:32-33.

Mark 1:10 And immediately, coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens being parted and the Spirit as a dove descending upon Him.

Mark 1:12 And immediately the Spirit thrust Him out into the wilderness.

Matt. 4:1 Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.

Luke 4:1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, while being tempted for forty days by the devil.

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to announce the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed.

John 1:32 And John testified, saying, I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He abode upon Him.

John 1:33 And I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water, He said to me, He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him, this is He who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

2. In the believers to flow out as rivers of living water was not yet before Christ's glorification—resurrection—John 7:39-39.

John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

John 7:39 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.

3. Through and in His resurrection Christ as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit to enter into His believers to flow out as rivers of living water—1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 21:6, 22:17b.

1 Cor. 15:45b …The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Rev. 21:6 And He said to me, They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely.

Rev. 22:17b And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely.

4. To consummate the processed Triune God—Matt. 28:19b:

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

a. As the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

b. Consummating in the last of the Divine Trinity, that is, the Holy Spirit, as the consummation of the processed Triune God.

5. To be the Paraclete, the Comforter, to the believers—John 14:16-17.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever,

John 14:17 Even 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.

6. To be the reality of the processed Triune God—John 14:17a, 15:26b, 16:13; 1 John 5:6b.

John 14:17a Even the Spirit of reality.

John 15:26b The Spirit of reality, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify concerning Me.

John 16:13 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.

1 John 5:6b …And the Spirit is He who testifies, because the Spirit is the reality.

7. To be the reaching of the processed Triune God to the believers.

8. To be the believers' access unto the Father, the source of the Divine Trinity—Eph. 2:18.

Eph. 2:18 For through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father.

9. To be the fellowship of the processed Triune God with the believers for their enjoyment of the riches of the Divine Trinity—2 Cor. 13:14.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C. Being the Spirit of Jesus—partaking of Jesus' birth, living, and suffering—Acts 16:7.

Acts 16:7 And when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

D. Being the Spirit of Christ—partaking of Christ's resurrection and life dispensing—Rom. 8:9b.

Rom. 8:9b Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.

E. Being the Spirit of Jesus Christ—partaking of Jesus' birth, living, and suffering and Christ's resurrection and life-dispensing to have the bountiful supply that the believers can be saved in all things—Phil. 1:19.

Phil. 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

F. Being the Spirit of life, the life-giving Spirit—partaking of Christ's human life and His life-giving—Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 15:45b.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

1 Cor. 15:45b …The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

G. Being the Lord Spirit, the pneumatic Christ—2 Cor. 3:17-18:

2 Cor. 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

1. For the metabolic transformation of the believers into the Lord's image, from glory to glory.

2. By the renewing of the mind—Rom. 12:2b.

Rom. 12:2b But be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

3. For the growth and the building up of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 3:6, 9b, 12; Eph. 4:16b.

1 Cor. 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.
1 Cor. 3:9b You are God's cultivated land, God's building.
1 Cor. 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble.
Eph. 4:16b Causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

REFERENCE

Life Lessons, Vol. 1, Ch. 10; The Spirit With Our Spirit, Chs. 2-3; The Spirit, Msg. 2.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THE SPIRIT IS:

The Spirit of God in God's Creation of the Universe

Every story in the Old Testament is related to God. The first story is concerning God's creation of the heavens and the earth, with millions of items, and His creation of man. In this story the Spirit of God is mentioned. Genesis 1:1 says that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Then the following verse says, "The Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters" (Heb.). Thus, we see that the Spirit was the Spirit of God in God's creation of the universe.

The Spirit of Jehovah in God's Reaching of Men and in His Care for Men

After His creation, God began to work on man. In God's work on man, His name is Jehovah. The Spirit of Jehovah is in God's reaching of men and in His care for men (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; Gen. 6:3a). The title Jehovah literally means "He that is who He is; therefore, the eternal I Am." As Jehovah, He is the One who was in the past, who is in the present, and who is to come in

the future (Rev. 1:4). Jehovah simply means to be. God was, God is, and God shall be forever. He is the great I Am.

God told Moses that His name was "I Am That I Am" (Exo. 3:14). This means, "I am always the thing which should be." If there is a need of light, He is the light. If there is a need of life, He is the life. He is everything. The Lord Jesus Himself told us that His name is "I Am" (John 8:58). The name I Am means that the very One who works on man is everything to man. He takes care of man and He comes upon man. This is Jehovah in His reaching of man and in His care for man.

The Spirit of Holiness in God's Making His Chosen People Holy unto Himself

God is caring for man mainly to make man holy. To be holy means to be separated unto God. Man's fall caused him to depart from God to become common, worldly, secular, and even dirty. So God needs to take care of man, making man separate from all things other than Himself. This is to make man holy. Thus, the Spirit in the Old Testament is the Spirit of holiness in God's making His chosen people holy unto Himself (Psa. 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11). This is not the same as the Holy Spirit, which is used in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit is more intensified than the Spirit of holiness.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, THE SPIRIT BEING:

The Holy Spirit

The first divine title used for the Spirit in the New Testament is the Holy Spirit. God is a Spirit and this Spirit now is totally "the Holy." We are now in an age in which God Himself as the Spirit is "the Holy" to make man not only separated unto Him but also one with Him. In the Old Testament, the most God could do with man was to make man separated unto Him but not one with Him. But now in the New Testament age, the time has come in which God would go further and deeper to make man absolutely one with Him, to make man Him and to make Him man. Athanasius, who was one of the church fathers, said concerning Christ: "He was made man that we

might be made God." This means that we are made God in life and in nature, but not in the Godhead. This process takes place by the Spirit the Holy.

In the Conception of John the Baptist to Introduce God's becoming a Man in His Incarnation

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of holiness is mentioned but not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is applied first to John the Baptist. This title is used in the conception of John the Baptist to introduce God's becoming a man in His incarnation (Luke 1:13-17). Luke 1:15 says concerning John the Baptist, "He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." The preparing of the way for the Savior's coming required that His forerunner, John the Baptist, be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, so that he could separate the people unto God from all things other than God, making them holy unto Him for His purpose.

In the Conception of Jesus in God's Incarnation to Be a Man in the Flesh

The beginning of the New Testament gives us a record of two conceptions. One was the conception of John the Baptist and the other was the conception of the Lord Jesus in God's incarnation to be a man in the flesh (Luke 1:30-36; Matt. 1:18-20). With these two conceptions, the New Testament uses the particular title the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is used in the New Testament due to the change of the age. In order for God to become a man so that man could become God, there was the need of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament was an age of figures and types, but the New Testament is the time of fulfillment, the age of reality, in which God became a man by being begotten of the Holy Spirit into humanity (Matt. 1:18, 20).

The Spirit

With whom Jesus Was Anointed and Who Was in the Move of the Man Jesus in His Ministry to God on the Earth

The Spirit anointed Jesus and was in the move of the man Jesus in His ministry to God on the earth (Mark 1:10, 12; Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1, 18; John 1:32-33). After Jesus was baptized, the spirit as a dove descended upon Him. In symbolic form, Jesus is the Lamb, and the Spirit is the dove. The Spirit as the dove came upon Jesus as the Lamb to carry out God's redemption and salvation for the accomplishing of God's economy.

The Spirit within the Believers, Flowing Out as Rivers of Living Water, Was Not Yet

The Spirit …anointed Christ and to move with Christ, but at that time the Spirit had not yet entered into the believers to flow out as rivers of living water (John 7:37-39). In this sense "the Spirit was not yet." John 7 tells us that the Spirit was not yet, because by that time Jesus was not glorified in His resurrection. Resurrection was for the man Jesus to get out of His human shell and to release the divine life, and this resurrection is called glorification. Before Christ was thus glorified, the Spirit was not yet. When John said "the spirit was not yet," he meant that the Spirit was not yet to flow out of the believers as rivers of living water. But the Spirit was there for the anointing of Christ and the moving of Christ in His ministry.

Through and in His Resurrection Christ as the Last Adam Became the Life-giving Spirit to Enter into His Believers to Flow Out as Rivers of Living Water

Through and in His resurrection Christ as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit to enter into His believers to flow out as rivers of living water (1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 21:6; 22:17c). God is a Spirit and the Second of the Triune God in the flesh became a life-giving Spirit. Prior to Christ's resurrection, God was a Spirit but not a life-giving Spirit. Before Christ's death and resurrection, God had no way to enter into man to be man's life. Between man and God there were a number of negative things as obstacles. According to the typology seen in Genesis, the way to God as the tree of life was closed by the requirements of God's glory, God's holiness, and God's

righteousness (Gen. 3:24). A fallen, sinful, unclean man was altogether unable to take the tree of life, to take God in as life, until Christ's death fulfilled these requirements.

Hebrews 10 reveals that the death of Christ opened the way, a new and living way, so that we can go into the Holy of Holies to partake of God as the tree of life (vv. 19-20). In His death He fulfilled all the requirements of God's glory, holiness, and righteousness; then in resurrection He changed in form to be the life-giving Spirit. This was absolutely for the organic union between God and man—to bring God into man and to bring man into God in His resurrection. Today we can take the tree of life and drink the water of life so that the Triune God can flow out from our innermost being as rivers of living water. (The Spirit With Our Spirit, pp. 19-26)

To Consummate The Processed Triune God

There are many hints in the Old Testament through which we can know that God is triune, but it is difficult to see in the Old Testament that the Triune God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is not until the end of the first Gospel in the New Testament that we see the composition of the Divine Trinity (Matt. 28:19b). The composition of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit was not clearly and completely unveiled until after Christ's resurrection. After His resurrection, and before His ascension, He came back to the disciples and charged them to disciple the nations, baptizing them, the new believers, into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In the Acts the apostles baptized people into the name of Jesus Christ (8:16; 19:5). This means that Jesus Christ equals the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Before the man Jesus became the life-giving Spirit, the Divine Trinity was not fully consummated.

The Second of the Divine Trinity is the Son. He is the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16) and the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29). Before Christ was incarnated, He did not have humanity; before His incarnation the Son was only divine. Furthermore, before His resurrection the Son was God's only begotten Son, not the Firstborn. In this sense, the Second of the Divine

Trinity was not fully consummated before His resurrection. He needed to pick up humanity through incarnation, and He needed to become the firstborn Son of God through resurrection (Acts 13:33). So after His incarnation and resurrection, the Second of the Trinity was completed, consummated.

Now we need to consider the Third of the Divine Trinity—the Spirit. Before the incarnation and resurrection, the Spirit was only the Spirit of God, not the Spirit of Man. The Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of Man. In the Spirit of God prior to the incarnation, there was no human living, no all-inclusive death, and no element of resurrection. In other words, before the incarnation and the resurrection, the Spirit of God was not compounded. It was through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection that the Spirit of God was compounded with humanity and with Christ's death and resurrection. So after Christ's resurrection, the Third of the Divine Trinity was also consummated. After the resurrection, the Spirit of God is the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and the Lord Spirit. All these aspects of the Spirit are for the consummation of the Triune God. The Triune God was consummated in Christ's resurrection, so after His resurrection the Lord came back to say that we are to baptize people into the name to the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

To Be The Paraclete, The Comforter, To The Believers

The Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God is the Paraclete, the Comforter, to the believers (John14:16-17). In John 14:16 the Lord said He would ask the Father to give us another Comforter. The Comforter is the Paraclete. The Greek word here means "advocate, one alongside who takes care of our cause, our affairs." The Spirit who is the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and the Lord Spirit is the Paraclete to us, the One who is always alongside of us to take care of our case, our affairs, and our needs.

To Be The Reality Of The Processed Triune God

The life-giving Spirit is the reality of the processed Triune God (John 14:17a; 15:26b; 16:13; 1 John 5:6b). If we have this Spirit, we have the reality of the Divine Trinity, who is processed and consummated.

To Be The Reaching Of The Processed Triune God To The Believers

The life-giving Spirit is the reaching of the processed Triune God to the believers. If there were not such a Spirit, the Triune God would have no way to reach us. The father is the source; the Son is the course; and the Spirit is the reaching. The Triune God reaches us through the Spirit that gives life.

To Be The Believers' Access Unto The Father, The Source Of The Divine Trinity

The Spirit is also the believers' access unto the Father (Eph. 2:18), the source of the Divine Trinity. For the Spirit to be the "reaching" means that He comes to us. For Him to be the "access" means that we go to Him. This is the proper communication—coming and going. This Spirit is God's coming, and this Spirit is also our entrance, the access. Without the Spirit, there is no entry, no access, for us to enter into the Triune God. For the Triune God to reach us, we need the Spirit. For us to enter into the Triune God, we need the Spirit. This Spirit is God's reaching; He is also our entry, our access, into the Divine Trinity.

To Be The Fellowship Of The Processed Triune God With Believers For Their Enjoyment Of The Riches Of The Divine Trinity

Second Corinthians 13:14 reveals that the Spirit is the fellowship of the processed Triune God with the believers for their enjoyment of the riches of the Divine Trinity. When He reaches us, and we enter into Him, there is the fellowship. Then we remain in the fellowship to enjoy all the riches of the Triune God embodied in Christ. (pp. 32-35)

The Spirit of Jesus

In the New Testament, the life-giving Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7). This title of the Spirit is concerning Jesus in His humanity, who passed through human living and death on the cross. It indicated that in the Spirit there is not only the divine element of God but also the human element of Jesus and the elements of His human living and suffering of death.

The Spirit of Christ

The Spirit of Christ is concerning Christ in His divinity, who conquered death and became the life in resurrection with the resurrection power, indicating that in the Spirit there is the element of divinity that became the death-conquering and the life-dispensing spirit (Rom. 8:9b).

The Spirit of Jesus Christ

The Spirit of Jesus Christ refers to the Spirit, comprising all the elements of Jesus' humanity with His death and Christ's divinity with His resurrection, who becomes the bountiful supply of the unsearchable Christ for support of His believers (Phil. 1:19b). (p. 31)

The Life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of Life

According to 1 Corinthians 15:45 the Spirit is the life-giving Spirit, and Christ became this life-giving Spirit in His resurrection. The life-giving Spirit has the ability to give us life. The Spirit is moving, working, and living in us to impart life into us. The life-giving Spirit is now working and moving in the being of the believers. The Spirit is the life-imparting Spirit, working to give life to our whole being.

The Spirit of life is the pneumatic Christ in resurrection as the Spirit of the divine life to His believers. The term the Spirit of life is used only once in the New Testament—in Romans 8:2. The Spirit of life is the reality of life, for this Spirit contains the element of the divine life. Actually, the Spirit Himself is life. Therefore, with the Spirit of life, we have the riches of the

divine life. (The Spirit, pp. 18-19)

The Lord Spirit, the Pneumatic Christ

The Lord Spirit is a compound title (2 Cor. 3:18) referring to the pneumatic Christ. This is similar to the compound title the Father God. This does not mean that the Father and God are separately two. The Father and God are one. The pneumatic Christ refers to Christ as the Spirit. Christ and the Spirit are not separately two; They are one. The Lord Spirit is the pneumatic Christ.

The Lord Spirit, the pneumatic Christ, is for the metabolic transformation of the believers into the Lord's image, from one degree of glory to a higher degree of glory (2 Cor. 3:17-18). Such transformation takes place by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2b), and this is for the growth and the building up of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 3:6, 9b, 12a; Eph. 4:16b). (The Spirit With Our Spirit, p. 32)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, explain what the Spirit is in the Old Testament.

2. According to the Bible, explain the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

3. According to the Bible, explain the Spirit of life and the Lord Spirit in the New Testament.

4. According to the Bible, explain the Spirit after Christ's resurrection in the New Testament.

LESSON ELEVEN

WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS (2)

Scripture Reading:

Exo. 30:22-30 Moreover Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, You also take the finest spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred fifty shekels, and of fragrant calamus two hundred fifty shekels, and of cassia five hundred shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. And you shall make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded according to the perfumer's art; it shall be a holy anointing oil. And with it you shall anoint the Tent of Meeting and the Ark of the Testimony, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base. Thus you shall sanctify them that they may be most holy; whatever touches them shall be holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons and sanctify them that they may serve Me as priests.

Rev. 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Hymn: 266

OUTLINE

H. The compound anointing Spirit—Exo. 30:22-30:

1. Compounded with the unique God, as the base, as the divinity of Christ, typified by the one hin of olive oil—24b.

2. With God's Diving Trinity, typified by the three units of five hundred shekels of the spices—23-24a.

3. With Christ's humanity, typified by the four kinds of spices.

4. With Christ's death and its killing effectiveness, typified by myrrh and cinnamon—23a.

5. With Christ's resurrection and its repelling power, typified by calamus and cassia—23b-24a.

6. As an ointment for the anointing of all the things and persons related to the worship of God—Exo. 30:25-30; 2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27.

2 Cor. 1:21 But the One who firmly attaches us with you unto Christ and has anointed us is God.

1 John 2:20 And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know.

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

7. As the Holy Spirit to seal the believers of Christ—Eph. 1:13; 4:30b; 2 Cor. 1:22a:

Eph. 1:13 In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise.

Eph. 4:30b In whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.

2 Cor. 1:22a He who has also sealed us…

a. To dispense the divine element of the processed Triune God into the believers and saturate them with it.

b. Transforming the believers into the inheritance of God—Eph. 1:11.

Eph. 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

8. As the sealing Spirit to be a pledge to the believers—Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22:

Eph. 1:14 Who is the pledge of our inheritance unto the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory.

2 Cor. 1:22 He who has also sealed us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

a. Guaranteeing God as the inheritance of the believers.

b. Giving the believers a foretaste of God as their heritage.

I. The essential Spirit and the economical Spirit of the processed Triune God:

1. The essential Spirit of God, the Spirit of life, breathed into the believers as the divine essence of the divine life—Rom. 8:2; John 20:22.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

2. The economical Spirit of God, the Spirit of power, poured out upon the believers as the divine essence of the divine power—Acts 1:8; 2:2, 4, 17.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there was a sound out of heaven, as of a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, even as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth.

Acts 2:17 And it shall be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream things in dreams.

J. The Spirit being the seven Spirits in Revelation—Rev. 1:4-5a, 4:5, 5:6:

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

Rev. 1:5a And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth…

Rev. 4:5 And out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Rev. 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

1. The sevenfold intensified Spirit for the church's degradation in the

dark age.

2. Ranked as the second in the Divine Trinity instead of the third, indicating the intensification of the Spirit—Rev. 1:4-5a.

3. As the seven lamps burning before the throne of God to carry out the divine administration for the consummation of the divine economy—Rev. 4:5.

4. As the seven eyes of the Lamb, the observing parts of our Redeemer, to observe all the churches in all the nations for the building up of His Body to consummate the building up of the New Jerusalem, accomplishing the eternal economy of God—Rev. 5:6; 21:1-3.

Rev. 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Rev. 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:3 And I heard a loud voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.

5. To be the speaking Spirit to all the churches: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."—Rev. 2:7, 11, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

Rev. 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Rev. 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death.

Rev. 2:29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

K. The all-inclusive Spirit is the Spirit, the consummated Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God—John 7:39; Rev. 22:17:

John 7:39 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.

Rev. 22:17 And 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.

1. **The Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God marries the bride as the consummation of the redeemed, regenerated, and transformed tripartite man.**
2. **The Spirit as the consummated God and the transformed tripartite man will be married to be one heavenly, universal couple for eternity.**

REFERENCE

The Spirit With Our Spirit, Chs. 4-5; Holy Word for Morning Revival—The Crucial Contents of God's Ministry (2), Week 7; General Outline of God's Economy and the Proper Living of a God-man, Msg. 2.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

The Compound Anointing Spirit

In order to experience Christ's death in Romans 6, we must enter into the experience of the Spirit in Romans 8. We can experience Christ's death only in the Spirit. But in his earlier ministry, he told us that to experience Christ's death, we have to reckon ourselves dead. That was based upon Romans 6:11. Later, he found out that reckoning does not work. Reckoning was stressed by A. B. Simpson, the founder of Christian and Missionary Alliance. Without the Spirit, however, reckoning does not work. The more you reckon yourself to be dead, the more you are alive. (The Spirit With Our Spirit, p.41)

Compounded With the Unique God, as the Base

The best type of the all-inclusive Spirit of Christ as the compound

anointing Spirit is the compound ointment spoken of in Exodus 30 (see Life-study of Exodus, Messages 157-166, pp. 1679-1776). This type reveals that the compound anointing Spirit is compounded with the unique God, as the base, as the divinity of Christ, typified by the one hin of olive oil (v. 24b).

With God's Divine Trinity

The compound anointing Spirit is compounded with God's Divine Trinity, typified by the three units of five hundred shekels of the spices (vv. 23-24a). The middle unit of five hundred shekels was split into two units of two hundred fifty shekels each. This signifies that the Second of the Divine Trinity was split, crucified, on the cross.

With Christ's Humanity

The compound anointing Spirit is also compounded with Christ's humanity, typified by the four kinds of spices.

With Christ Death and Its Killing Effectiveness

The Spirit is compounded with Christ's death and its killing effectiveness, typified by myrrh and cinnamon (v. 23a).

With Christ's Resurrection and Its Repelling Power

Christ's resurrection and its repelling power, typified by calamus and cassia (vv. 23b-24a), are also elements of the compound anointing Spirit. Calamus is a reed shooting up into the air out of a marsh or a muddy place. Thus, it signifies the rising up of the Lord Jesus from the place of death. Cassia in ancient times was used as a repellent to drive away insects and snakes. Thus, it signifies the repelling power of Christ's resurrection.

As an Ointment for Anointing

All the above elements compounded together create an ointment for the anointing of all the things and persons related to the worship of God (Exo.

30:25-30; 2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

As the Holy Spirit to Seal the Believers of Christ

In the New Testament, we see the compound anointing Spirit operating as the Holy Spirit to seal the believers of Christ (Eph. 1:13; 4:30b; 2 Cor. 1:22a). To seal means to anoint. When a person puts his seal on something, that sealing is the anointing. The Spirit is a living seal that saturates us with the divine element. We have to pray, "Lord, don't just seal me once, but saturate me all the time. I need Your sealing; I need Your saturating." When we live by the Spirit, we have the sense that something within us is saturating us, and that saturating is the continuous sealing. This sealing dispenses the divine element of the processed Triune God into the believers and saturates them with it. It also transforms the believers into the inheritance of God (Eph. 1:11). It is remarkable that we sinners can be transformed to such an extent that we are considered by God as His inheritance. How could we, the constitution of sin, be God's inheritance? Surely, this implies transformation.

Our being God's inheritance, as spoken of in Ephesians 1:11, is related to Christ's redemption (v. 7). We were lost in sin, but Christ's redemption brought us out of sin and unto God. Then we became persons in Christ. Christ has become our sphere and our realm in which His element is always saturating us, and that saturating is the Spirit's sealing to transform us into God's treasure. Today, in Christ, God considers us as His treasure to become His inheritance. The life-giving Spirit anoints us, seals us, saturates us, with the divine element. This saturating is the dispensing, and the dispensing is transforming us, making us the treasure of God. If we walk in the Spirit every day, even every moment, we are under this sealing, this saturating, to transform us into a treasure for God's inheritance.

As the Sealing Spirit to be a Pledge to the Believers

The sealing Spirit becomes a pledge to the believers (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22b), guaranteeing God as the inheritance of the believers and giving the

believers a foretaste of God as their heritage. We are God's inheritance, and God is our inheritance. For us to be God's inheritance, we need the sealing. For us to have God as our inheritance, we need the pledging. In ancient times the Greek word for pledge was used in the purchasing of land. The seller gave the purchaser some soil from the land as a sample. Hence, a pledge, according to ancient Greek usage, is also a sample. The Holy Spirit is a sample of what we will inherit of God in full. (pp. 44-46)

The Essential Spirit and the Economical Spirit of the Processed Triune God

The essential Spirit of God is the Spirit of life breathed into the believers as the divine essence of the divine life (Rom. 8:2; John 20:22). The economical Spirit of God, the Spirit of power, was poured out upon the believers as the divine essence of the divine power (Acts 1:8; 2:2, 4, 17). The consummated Spirit has these two aspects: the inward, essential aspect and the outward, economical aspect. On the day of resurrection, the Lord breathed the essential Spirit as life into His disciples. Then after fifty days, on the day of Pentecost, He poured out the economical Spirit of power upon the disciples. The essential Spirit is for our life and living inwardly. The economical Spirit is for our ministry and work outwardly. To be economical means to be for God's economy, for God's work, to carry out His plan.

The Lord Jesus also experienced the Spirit in these two aspects. He was born of the Spirit, filled up with the Spirit, and constituted with the Spirit. But when He became thirty years of age to come out to do the work for God to carry out God's economy, the Holy Spirit came upon Him in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16). This was the economical aspect of the Spirit for Christ to carry out God's economy. (p.57)

The Seven Spirits

The Sevenfold Intensified Spirit

The book of Revelation reveals the seven Spirits as the sevenfold

intensified Spirit for the church's degradation in the dark age. Even by the end of the first century, … the degradation of the church began and has continued until today.

Throughout the past nineteen centuries, God has been carrying out His economy; on the other hand, Satan has been carrying out his chaos. We published a book on this subject entitled The Satanic Chaos in the Old Creation and the Divine economy for the New Creation. The satanic chaos and the divine economy go together. Eventually, the satanic chaos will be done away with in the lake of fire, and the divine economy will consummate in the New Jerusalem. In the universe there are both day and night. When you see the church in the dark age, God has intensified His Spirit sevenfold.

When the Lord was on this earth for thirty-three and a half years, He did everything by the Spirit, but the Spirit was still just one. With the early apostles at the time of Pentecost, the Spirit was also one. But in the age of Revelation, the Spirit has been intensified sevenfold. Such an intensified Spirit is for us to be vitalized, to be the overcomers in the degradation of the church. At the end of the first century, it was not easy to overcome. Today with us it is the same. In this dark age we need the sevenfold intensified Spirit. Many Christians appreciate what is recorded in the four Gospels and the Acts at Peter's time, but they should appreciate even more what we have today. Today what we experience is the sevenfold intensified Spirit. In order to be the overcomers, we need such a Spirit.

Ranked As The Second In The Divine Trinity

In Revelation 1 the sevenfold Spirit is ranked as the second in the Divine Trinity instead of the third, indicating the intensification of the Spirit (vv. 4-5a).

As The Seven Lamps Burning Before The Throne Of God

Revelation 4:5 says that the seven Spirits are the seven lamps burning before the throne of God to carry out the divine administration for the

consummation of the divine economy. God's administration today is not weak. The administration of God today on this earth to accomplish His economy is strong in a sevenfold way. The sevenfold Spirit is the seven lamps of fire before the throne of God to direct the world situation in order to execute God's economy in the universe.

As the Seven Eyes of the Lamb

The seven Spirits are the seven eyes of the Lamb, the observing parts of our Redeemer, to observe all the churches in all the nations for the building up of His Body to consummate the building up of the New Jerusalem, accomplishing the eternal economy of God (Rev. 5:6; 21:1-3). Eventually, the life-giving Spirit, the compound Spirit, has become the sevenfold Spirit as the seven eyes of the Lamb. This exposes the wrong teaching that Christ and the Spirit are separate. The seven Spirits are the eyes of Christ. How could your eyes be separate from you? They are a part of you. A person's eyes are for observing and transfusing. When you look at someone, you observe him and your looking at him transfuses something of you into him. The sevenfold Spirit today is the eyes of our Savior. He observes us and transfuses all His riches into us by His seven eyes.

To Be the Speaking Spirit to All the Churches

The sevenfold intensified Spirit is the speaking Spirit to all the churches. The Lord's epistles to the seven churches are in Revelation 2 and 3. At the beginning of each epistle, it was the Lord Jesus speaking (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14), yet at the end of each epistle it says that whoever has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to all the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). (pp. 54-56)

The Consummated Spirit As The Ultimate Consummation Of The Processed Triune God

Before Christ's resurrection, the economy of God was merely a plan; it was not yet accomplished. After Christ came and accomplished God's

economy through His death and resurrection, it was time for the application; therefore, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are mentioned. The plan is the commencement, the accomplishment is the process, and the application is the consummation. The consummation is with whom? Not with the Father, nor with the Son, but with the Spirit. This does not mean, however, that since the consummation is with the Spirit, it has nothing to do with the Son or the Father. Because the Son is the embodiment of the Father, and the Spirit is the realization of the Son, the Spirit as the consummation includes the Son as well as the Father. (General Outline of God's Economy and the Proper Living of a God-man, pp. 17-18)

The entire revelation of the Bible shows us the love story of a universal couple. That is, the sovereign Lord, who created the universe and all things, the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—who ultimately became the life-giving Spirit, is joined in marriage to the created, redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite man—composed of spirit, soul, and body—who ultimately constitutes the church, the expression of God. In the eternity that is without end, by the divine, eternal, and surpassingly glorious life, they will live a life that is the mingling of God and man as one spirit, a life that is superexcellent and that overflows with blessings and joy. (New Testament Recovery Version, Rev. 22:17, footnote 1.)

Ultimately, the Spirit is the consummation of the processed Triune God. This is the consummation of the Triune God after His ascension, that is, after He had been fully processed. Such a Spirit speaks together with the bride as the universal couple (Rev. 22:17a). (The Spirit With Our Spirit, pp. 57-58)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, explain the elements and function of the compound anointing Spirit.

2. According to the Bible, explain the difference between the essential Spirit and the economical Spirit of the processed Triune God.

3. According to the Bible, explain why the Spirit became the seven Spirits in Revelation.

LESSON TWELVE

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Scripture Reading:

1 Pet. 1:2 Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Rom. 8:26 Moreover, in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

Hymn: 1118

OUTLINE

I. The initial stage of the divine dispensing in the believers:

A. He sanctifies, separates, God's chosen people from the fallen people of the world and leads them to repent to God and receive Christ—1 Pet. 1:2.

1 Pet. 1:2 Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

B. He regenerates the people who have received Christ as their Savior with His resurrection life to be the sons of God—1 Pet. 1:3; Titus 3:5; John 3:5; 1:12.

1 Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Titus 3:5 Not out of works in righteousness which we did but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name.

C. He sanctifies the regenerated sons of God with the holy nature of God—Rom. 15:16; 6:19, 22.

Rom. 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

Rom. 6:19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification.

Rom. 6:22 But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life.

D. He renews the sanctified saints—Titus 3:5.

Titus 3:5 Not out of works in righteousness which we did but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit,

E. He leads the sons of God—Rom. 8:14.

Rom. 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

F. He, as the Spirit of life and the Spirit of God, indwells the believers, imparting life and peace to them and even life to their mortal bodies—Rom. 8:2, 9, 11, 6.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Rom. 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.

Rom. 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

II. The stage of the working of the inner life:

A. He transforms the renewed saints metabolically into the glorious image of Christ—Rom. 12:2a; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29.

Rom. 12:2a And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind…

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

B. He conforms the transformed saints to the image of the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:29.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

C. He comforts the believers—John 14:16; Acts 9:31.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever.

Acts 9:31 So then the church throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it was multiplied.

D. He, who searches all things, even the depths of God, reveals all the things that God has done for the believers—1 Cor. 2:10.

1 Cor. 2:10 But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

E. He imparts righteousness, peace, and joy into the believers as the reality of the kingdom of God—Rom. 14:17.

Rom. 4:17 (As it is written, "I have appointed you a father of many nations") in the sight of God whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls the things not being as being.

F. As the dispenser of what God is in Christ to the believers, He dispenses the reality of God to them—John 16:13.

John 16:13 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.

III. The stage of maintaining the divine fellowship:

A. As the flow of God (John 7:38), He transmits in His fellowship the grace of Christ (the element of the divine life) with the love of God (the source of the grace of Christ)—2 Cor. 13:14.

John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

B. He seals the believers with all that Christ is and all that He has accomplished, obtained, and attained, thus dispensing all the divine elements of Christ into the very being of the believers until they will be redeemed in their body, that is, transfigured to be like the glorious body of Christ—Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22; Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:21.

Eph. 1:13 In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise.

Eph. 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.

2 Cor. 1:22 He who has also sealed us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

Rom. 8:23 And not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body.

Phil. 3:21 Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself.

C. He is the pledge from God to the believers guaranteeing that the Triune God is their inheritance—Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5.

Eph. 1:14 Who is the pledge of our inheritance unto the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory.

2 Cor. 1:22 He who has also sealed us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

2 Cor. 5:5 Now He who has wrought us for this very thing is God, who has given to us the Spirit as a pledge.

D. He, as the compound ointment, anoints the believers with the divine elements of Christ—2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27.

2 Cor. 1:21 But the One who firmly attaches us with you unto Christ and has anointed us is God.

1 John 2:20 And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know.

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

E. He witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God—Rom. 8:16.

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

F. He intercedes with groanings for the believers who are transformed by God under the working together of all things—Rom. 8:26-29.

Rom. 8:26 Moreover, in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Rom. 8:27 But He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to God.

Rom. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;

G. He, as the indwelling Spirit, is the One in whom the believers pray in their spirit—Jude 20; Eph. 6:18.

Jude 20 But you, beloved, building up yourselves upon your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.

Eph. 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints.

H. He holds the sword of the Spirit of God for the believers to take the offensive in the spiritual warfare—Eph. 6:17-18.

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,

Eph. 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the

saints.

IV. The stage of Christian ministry:

A. In the aspect of ministry:

1. He sets apart and sends out the apostles to spread the gospel of Christ—Acts 13:2, 4.

Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

Acts 13:4 They then, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed away to Cyprus.

2. He leads the apostles in their trips for the gospel spreading—Acts 16:6-7.

Acts 16:6 And they passed through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

Acts 16:7 And when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

3. He prophesies through the prophets concerning the apostles' sufferings and persecutions—Acts 21:11.

Acts 21:11 And he came to us and took Paul's belt; and having bound his own feet and hands, he said, Thus says the Holy Spirit, In this way will the Jews in Jerusalem bind the man whose belt this is and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

4. He leads the apostles to speak things concerning God's dealings with His people—1 Cor. 7:40.

1 Cor. 7:40 But she is more blessed if she so remains, according to my opinion; but I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

5. He, as the life-giving Spirit, gives life to the word of God, through whom the new testament ministers minister the word of God—2 Cor. 3:5-6.

2 Cor. 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God,

2 Cor. 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

6. He is the Spirit of the new testament ministry of righteousness—2

Cor. 3:8-9; 4:1.

2 Cor. 3:8 How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory?

2 Cor. 3:9 For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.

2 Cor. 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart.

B. In the aspect of the building up of the church:

1. He distributes different gifts to the believers—1 Cor. 12:4-11.

1 Cor. 12:4 But there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit;

1 Cor. 12:5 And there are distinctions of ministries, yet the same Lord;

1 Cor. 12:6 And there are distinctions of operations, but the same God, who operates all things in all.

1 Cor. 12:7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is profitable.

1 Cor. 12:8 For to one through the Spirit a word of wisdom is given, and to another a word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit;

1 Cor. 12:9 To a different one faith in the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing in the one Spirit,

1 Cor. 12:10 And to another operations of works of power, and to another prophecy, and to another discerning of spirits; to a different one various kinds of tongues, and to another interpretation of tongues.

1 Cor. 12:11 But the one and the same Spirit operates all these things, distributing to each one respectively even as He purposes.

2. He, as the reality of the speaking Christ, speaks to all the churches, calling for overcomers in the degradation of the church—Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 29; 3:5-6, 12-13, 21-22.

Rev. 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Rev. 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death.

Rev. 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives it.

Rev. 2:26 And he who overcomes and he who keeps My works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations;

Rev. 2:29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:5 He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Rev. 3:6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:12 He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Rev. 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:21 He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.

Rev. 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

3. As the essence of the Body of Christ, all that He works in and on the believers is for the constitution, the building, of the Body of Christ in Him as the oneness—Eph. 4:3-4.

Eph. 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:

Eph. 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling.

REFERENCE

The Ten Great Critical "Ones" for the Building Up of the Body of Christ, Ch. 4; The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 4, Msgs. 87-98.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE FOUR SECTIONS OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK

We need to be impressed with the fact that the work of the Spirit in the believers subjectively is for the divine dispensing. This means that the work of the Holy Spirit in us is for the purpose of dispensing the Triune God into us. Whatever the Spirit does in us is for the dispensing into our being of the Triune God in His life, nature, element, and essence. This is the glad tidings of the divine dispensing. The Triune God, by being consummated into the life-giving Spirit, is dispensing Himself into us. Now

this life-giving Spirit is working in many aspects to carry out this dispensing. Those aspects of the [initial stage] work of the Spirit in the believers for the divine dispensing …are one complete stage of the Spirit's work. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, Msg. 89, p. 953)

The second stage, which we have called the inner-life-working stage, …[Then] we come now to the third stage of the Spirit's work in us—the stage of the Spirit's fellowship. The Spirit is the fellowship between the Triune God and His chosen people. For this reason, 2 Corinthians 13:14 speaks of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also the fellowship among the believers. Therefore, the Spirit is the fellowship between the Triune God and the believers and also the fellowship the believers have with one another. The third stage of the Spirit's work in us, …the element of each aspect is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. (p.985)

The fourth and final stage of the Spirit's work in us… mainly concerns the church with the believers' gifts, functions, ministries, and work. (p.1029)

From this we see that the work of the Spirit covers all areas of the Christian life and ministry. The Christian life and ministry are altogether in the Spirit, with the Spirit, and of the Spirit. Apart from the all-inclusive Spirit, we can have neither the Christian life nor the Christian ministry. Therefore, we need the infilling of the Holy Spirit and also the outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that we may have an adequate Christian life and work. (Msg. 98, p.1061)

THE SPIRIT—THE ONE DIVINE APPLICATION

[The Spirit] applies all that the Triune God is in Christ, all that the all-inclusive Christ is, and all that He has accomplished, obtained, and attained to all the people whom God has chosen; thus He became the one divine application. The Father made the economy, the Son accomplished it, and the Spirit applies to us what the Son has accomplished. Thus, the Spirit is the application.

As the application, the Spirit sanctifies, separates, God's chosen people from the fallen people of the world and leads them to repent to God and receive Christ (1 Pet. 1:2). He regenerates the people who have received Christ as their Savior with His resurrection life to be the sons of God (1 Pet. 1:3; Titus 3:5; John 3:5; 1:12). He sanctifies the regenerated sons of God with the holy nature of God (Rom. 15:16; 6:19, 22) and renews the sanctified saints (Titus 3:5). He transforms the renewed saints metabolically into the glorious image of Christ (Rom. 12:2a; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29) and conforms the transformed saints to the image of the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29). The Spirit also seals the believers with all that Christ is and all that He has accomplished, obtained, and attained, thus dispensing all the divine elements of Christ into the very being of the believers until they will be redeemed in their body, that is, transfigured to be like the glorious body of Christ (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22; Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:21).

The Spirit is the pledge from God to the believers guaranteeing that the Triune God is their inheritance (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). He, as the compound ointment, anoints the believers with the divine elements of Christ (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27). He witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16). He, as the Spirit of life and the Spirit of God, indwells the believers, imparting life and peace to them and even life to their mortal bodies (Rom. 8:2, 9, 11, 6).

The one Spirit intercedes with groanings for the believers who are transformed by God under the working together of all things (Rom. 8:26-28). He, as the indwelling Spirit, is the One in whom the believers pray in their spirit (Jude 20; Eph. 6:18). He holds the sword of the Spirit of God for the believers to take the offensive in the spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:17-18). He comforts the believers (John 14:16; Acts 9:31). He leads the sons of God (Rom. 8:14). He, who searches all things, even the depths of God, reveals all the things that God has done for the believers (1 Cor. 2:10).

He, as the life-giving Spirit, gives life to the word of God, through whom the new testament ministers minister the word of God (2 Cor. 3:5-6). He is

the Spirit of the new testament ministry of righteousness (2 Cor. 3:8-9; 4:1). He imparts righteousness, peace, and joy into the believers as the reality of the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17). As the flow of God (John 7:38), He transmits in His fellowship the grace of Christ, the element of the divine life, with the love of God, the source of the grace of Christ (2 Cor. 13:14). As the dispenser of what God is in Christ as grace to the believers, He dispenses the reality of God as grace to them (Heb. 10:29).

The Spirit sets apart and sends out the apostles to spread the gospel of Christ (Acts 13:2, 4). He leads the apostles in their trips for the gospel spreading (Acts 16:6-7). He prophesies through the prophets concerning the apostles' sufferings and persecutions (Acts 21:11). He leads the apostles to speak things concerning God's dealings with His people (1 Cor. 7:40).

He distributes different gifts to the believers (1 Cor. 12:4-11). He, as the reality of the speaking Christ, speaks to all the churches, calling for overcomers in the degradation of the church (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 29; 3:5-6, 12-13, 21-22). As the essence of the Body of Christ, all that He works in and on the believers is for the constitution, the building, of the Body of Christ in Him as the oneness (Eph. 4:3-4). (The Ten Great Critical "Ones" for the Building Up of the Body of Christ, Msg. 4)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, explain the Spirit's work in the initial stage of the divine dispensing in the believers.

2. According to the Bible, explain the Spirit's work in the stage of the working of the inner life in the believers.

3. According to the Bible, explain the Spirit's work in the stage of maintaining the divine fellowship.

4. According to the Bible, explain the Spirit's work in the believers in the stage of the Christian's ministry.

LESSON THIRTEEN

THE CONDITION OF MAN BEFORE SALVATION AND THE JUDICIAL REDEMPTION OF GOD

Scripture Reading:

Rom. 3:23-25 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of his righteousness, in that in His forbearance God passed over the sins that had previously occurred.

Rom. 7:23 But I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members.

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. The condition before man are saved—the need of salvation:

A. Man's condition before God:

1. Sinned and being under the judgment of God—Rom. 3:23, 19; Heb. 9:27.

Rom. 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Rom. 3:19 Now we know that whatever things the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may fall under the judgment of God.

Heb. 9:27 And inasmuch as it is reserved for men to die once, and after this comes judgment,

2. Perishing by being cast into the lake of fire in the future—John 3:16; Rev. 20:15.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.

Rev. 20:15 And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

B. Man's condition in himself:

1. Being brought forth in iniquity, man's hearts are more deceitful than all things and are extremely wicked—Psa. 51:5; Jer.17:9.

Psa. 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin did my mother conceive me.

Jer. 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, And it is incurable; Who can know it?

2. Having nothing good in the flesh, being a slave of sin—Rom. 7:18; John 8:34.

Rom. 7:18 For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not.

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.

3. Having no hope, dying in sins in the future—Eph. 2:12; John 8:24.

Eph. 2:12 That you were at that time apart from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

John 8:24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins.

C. Man's condition before Satan:

1. Being the children of the Devil and under the authority of Satan—1 John 3:8, 10; John 8:44; Col. 1:13.

1 John 3:8 He who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, neither he who does not love his brother.

John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks the lie, he speaks it out of his own possessions; for he is a liar and the father of it.

Col. 1:13 Who delivered us out of the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

2. Lying in the evil one and going into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil—1 John 5:19; Matt. 25:41.

1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the evil one.

Matt. 25:41 Then He will say also to those on the left, Go away from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

D. The parts of man after the fall:

1. Fallen man has Satan as sin in his body, and the by-product is the flesh—Rom. 7:17-18.

Rom. 7:17 Now then it is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me.

Rom. 7:18 For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not.

2. The soul as the person, the human being, having been mingled with Satan as one, has become the self—Matt. 16:23-25.

Matt. 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.

Matt. 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Matt. 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.

3. The spirit as the inward organ has been defiled and deadened—made dormant and put out of function—2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 2:1.

2 Cor. 7:1 Therefore since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and of spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Eph. 2:1 And you, though dead in your offenses and sins.

4. The heart is deceitful above all and desperately wicked, with the mind blinded and hardened by Satan—2 Cor. 4:4; 3:14.

2 Cor. 4:4 In whom the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them.

2 Cor. 3:14 But their thoughts were hardened; for until the present day the same veil remains at the reading of the old covenant, it not being unveiled to them that the veil is being done away with in Christ.

II. The complete salvation of God having two aspects—the judicial aspect and the organic aspect:

A. The judicial aspect is the procedure of God's salvation through the

redemption of Christ for God's salvation to fully meet the righteous requirement of His law—Rom. 8:4a; 9:31.

Rom. 8:4a That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

Rom. 9:31 But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not attain to that law.

B. The organic aspect is the fulfillment of God's salvation through the life of Christ for the believers to be transformed and to grow and mature in the life of God—Rom. 5:10.

Rom. 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled.

C. The salvation of God is with Christ as the center, the Body of Christ as the line, and the New Jerusalem as the goal, and is fully accomplished through the life-giving Spirit.

III. The judicial redemption:

A. According to the righteousness of God—Rom. 1:17a; 3:21-26; 9:30-31.

Rom. 1:17a For the righteousness of God is revealed in it out of faith to faith.

Rom. 3:21 But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, witness being borne to it by the Law and the Prophets;

Rom. 3:22 Even the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ to all those who believe, for there is no distinction;

Rom. 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Rom. 3:24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Rom. 3:25 Whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness, in that in His forbearance God passed over the sins that had previously occurred,

Rom. 3:26 With a view to the demonstrating of His righteousness in the present time, so that He might be righteous and the One who justifies him who is of the faith of Jesus.

Rom. 9:30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have laid hold of righteousness, but a righteousness which is out of faith;

Rom. 9:31 But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not attain to that law.

B. The procedure of God's salvation.

C. Through the redemption of Christ for God's salvation to fully meet the righteous requirement of His law.

D. What the sinners may receive before God:

1. Forgiveness of sins—Luke 24:27.

Luke 24:27 And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He explained to them clearly in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

2. Washed—Heb. 1:3.

Heb. 1:3 Who, being the effulgence of His glory and the impress of His substance and upholding and bearing all things by the word of His power, having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

3. Justification—Rom. 3:24-25.

Rom. 3:24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Rom. 3:25 Whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness, in that in His forbearance God passed over the sins that had previously occurred,

4. Reconciled to God—Rom. 5:10a.

Rom. 5:10a For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.

5. Sanctified unto God positionally—1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 13:12.

1 Cor. 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours.

Heb. 13:12 Therefore also Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

E. Entering into the grace of God for the accomplishment of the purpose of God's salvation—Rom. 5:2.

Rom. 5:2 Through whom also we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and boast because of the hope of the glory of God.

REFERENCE

Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Ch. 1; The Parts of Man, Ch. 3; The Organic Aspect of God's Salvation, Ch. 1.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE CONDITION BEFORE MAN ARE SAVED—THE NEED OF SALVATION

Man's Condition Before God

Sinned and being under the judgment of God

The first condition of man before God is that he has sinned and is sinful. There are two sides to man's being sinful before God; one is positional, the other experiential. Positionally speaking, even though a man may not have sinned, he is still sinful before God. This is because he is a descendant of Adam. Adam was appointed by God to be the head of the human race, and as such he represents all of mankind. That this head and representative sinned means all men represented by him also sinned. When the one man Adam sinned, all his descendants whom he represented were placed into a sinful position before God.

Positionally speaking, man is sinful before God. Experientially speaking, man is also sinful before God. Who can say that he has never sinned? Who indeed has clean hands and an undefiled heart and has never had any experience of sin? Lying, stealing, filthy thoughts, and improper behavior belong to everyone. Man's position of sin produces his experience of sin. At the same time, man's experience of sin proves his position of sin. Both positionally and experientially speaking, man is sinful.

Since man has sinned, he has come under the judgment of God. This is because God is righteous and is the One who establishes the law. According to His righteousness and His law, He must judge sinful man. God's righteousness and law cause man to fall under His judgment.

Today man is not only under God's judgment but he is actually "condemned already." Whether or not a man has the realization and sensation, he has been condemned before God and is judged already. There is no need for him to wait for God's judgment in the future to be condemned. Man already has a verdict of sin and is condemned before God. When Adam sinned and was condemned by God, the entire human race in him was also condemned by God through his one offense. Today every

human being is born a condemned sinner.

Perishing by Being Cast into the Lake of Fire in the Future

After man has passed through God's final judgment, he will perish forever and will be thrown into the lake of fire to suffer eternally. The Lord said that there the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. Eaten by worms, burned by fire—how painful and terrible it will be! (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Ch. 1)

Man's Condition In Himself

Being Brought Forth in Iniquity, Man's Heart Being Deceitful above All Things and Being Incurable

Man is brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin. Man is born a sinner with a corrupted nature. Man can sin because his nature is corrupt by birth. Man does not need to learn to sin, for he is born with the innate capability to sin. Man does not learn to sin from his outward surroundings; it is the result of an inward growth. When a man is born, the seed of sin is already in him. At a certain time, sin simply grows out from within.

Man's heart is not only evil in its imagination from youth, but it is also deceitful above all things and incurable. There is not one item in creation that compares with the wickedness of man's heart. Man's heart is most deceitful! It is incurable! It is not only slightly wicked; it is wicked through and through—altogether incurable. Moreover, the evil of man's heart spreads not from without but from within. Often, even when there is no appearance of wickedness outwardly, the heart is corrupted within. This corruption merely manifests itself at the right time.

Having Nothing Good in the Flesh, Being a Slave of Sin

Look at the condition of man in himself! Nothing good dwells in his flesh!

Since man was brought forth in sin and man's heart is deceitful above all things and incurable, how can there be any good in his flesh? Who can say, "I will do good," and does it? Is it not true with man that "to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not" (v. 18b)? Since nothing good dwells in man's flesh, the good that man wills to do he does not work out.

Man is also sold to sin; he is the slave of sin and is not his own master. He is dominated and manipulated by sin to do many things against his will. Although everyone desires freedom today, not one is truly free; all are controlled and bound by sin. Who commits sins of his own accord? Who can be free from sin whenever he chooses to be? Have not all long struggles ended in vain?

Originally, man belonged to God, but now he belongs to sin; originally God was his Lord, but now sin is his lord. Sin has authority over man, making man his slave. Man is ruled by sin to commit sins and evils against his own will.

Having No Hope and Dying in Sins in the Future

What hope does man have living on earth today? What is his goal? Man is indeed empty! Man is indeed pitiful! Day by day, man is laboring and running in vain. Although he seeks enjoyment and pleasure every day of his life, ultimately it is like pursuing shadows and chasing after the wind. Man is empty and without hope because he is "without God" (v. 12) and because he lost God.

Since man has no hope today, he can only expect to die in sins and to descend into Hades woefully! The final issue of man's sin is his full transfer into death. Since man lives in sins for his entire life, he will die in sins and enter into eternal perdition.

Man's Condition Before Satan

Being the Children of the Devil and Being Under the Authority of Satan

Today man is not only sinful and corrupted but he is also from the devil and "of the devil" (1 John 3:8). The reason that man is from the devil and of the devil is that within him is the devil's life. Men are "the children of the devil," and the devil is man's "father" (John 8:44). A child must possess the life of his father. Since men are the children of the devil, within them are the devil's life and nature. The element of the devil is within man today. This is why man often resembles the devil in the way he lives. Man lies, man sins, and man lusts somewhat like the devil. This is because the lying, sinning and lusting life and nature within man are from the devil and of the devil. There is a life relationship and a union in nature between man and the devil.

Satan has his own kingdom and authority. Today men are subjects of his kingdom, ruled and controlled by him under his authority.

Lying in the Evil One, Going into the Eternal Fire Prepared for the Devil

Man is not only subject to Satan and blinded by Satan but he also lies in Satan's hand. Here in this verse Satan is called the evil one. Surely nothing good will come about when man lies in the hand of the evil one. As man is lying in Satan's hand, he is manipulated and slaughtered freely by Satan. After Satan blinds people he then manipulates and slaughters people as he pleases. …Oh, how pitiful are those lying in Satan's hand and being butchered by him! …Oh, how pitiful are those who visit the dance halls! …Oh, how pitiful are those who gamble all night! …Oh, how pitiful are the drug addicts and alcoholics! …Oh, how pitiful are those who are given to fornication and lasciviousness! They let Satan damage their bodies and shorten their lives against their will. Even if they struggle, it is impossible for them to be free! This is because they are lying in the hand of Satan the evil one.

The ultimate end of man in Satan's hand is to go with Satan into the eternal fire prepared for him. In other words, he will go into the lake of fire and suffer eternally. Since man collaborates with Satan to sin against God,

man should be punished with Satan in the eternal fire. Since man follows Satan to sin all his life, he should also accompany Satan to be punished forever. Since man walks with Satan, he will surely end with Satan. How fearful this is! (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Ch. 1)

The Parts of Man After the Fall

Not long after God created man, man fell. When man ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Satan entered into the body of man through the fruit of that tree (Gen. 3:6), …for the fruit …entered man's body…, sin… [has entered in the members of our body [Rom. 7:23]. Sin is the evil nature of Satan. …sin is Satan. Since sin is in the members of our body, we may say that Satan has entered our body. Satan is called by the Bible "the evil one" (Matt. 6:13; 1 John 5:19, ASV). The Greek text simply says " the evil." "Evil" is Satan himself; therefore, sin is Satan personified. Satan is really sin itself.

Because Satan as sin came into man's body, his body was changed in nature. Man's body became the flesh. (In Romans 8:13, "flesh" and "body" are interchangeably used.) When sin was injected into the body of man, the body underwent a change in nature. It became corrupted and ruined by sin, and thus was changed into the flesh. This is why all kinds of lusts are in the members of our body (Gal. 5:24; Col. 3:5). Originally, man's body was not flesh; it was good and pure (Gen. 1:31). It became flesh because it was ruined by the Evil in it. We must realize that fallen man has Satan as sin in his body, and the by-product is the flesh. (The Parts of Man, pp. 40-41)

Thus, man who was created by God with the purpose of being His vessel to contain and express Him, has been completely damaged by the Fall. The body as the outward organ has been taken over by Satan and thereby corrupted to become the flesh. The spirit as the inward organ has been defiled and deadened—made dormant and put out of function. The soul as the person, the human being, having been mingled with Satan as one, has become the self. And the heart is deceitful above all and desperately wicked, with the mind blinded and hardened by Satan. This is the condition

of fallen man. (p. 45)

THE COMPLETE SALVATION OF GOD HAVING TWO ASPECTS— THE JUDICIAL ASPECT AND THE ORGANIC ASPECT

The complete salvation of God has two aspects—the judicial aspect and the organic aspect. It is not that easy to understand what organic is and what judicial is. However, by the word judicial we know it has something to do with the law, and by the word organic we know it has something to do with life. Therefore, God's complete salvation has both the judicial aspect, an aspect related to the law, and the organic aspect, an aspect related to life.

However, the God-created man sinned and fell by following Satan; thus, man violated God's righteousness. God so loved the people of the world that He even wanted to make man the same as Hi is by His life. Yet man was seduced by Satan and became fallen by committing sin; thus, man violated the righteousness of God. What man violated was not God's grace or God's love but God's righteousness. According to the entire holy Scriptures, God's righteousness is God's principle of doing things. Whatever God does is righteous, and His righteousness as the foundation of His throne (Psa. 89:14) is the strictest. Therefore, we see two things here: God's love and God's righteousness. According to His love, God wants to make man the same as His is. However, man sinned and violated God's righteousness. God's righteousness is strict; whatever God wants to do for man must meet the requirement of His righteousness. Whatever is required by righteousness becomes the law. Therefore, the Bible shows us that after God's creation of man and man's fall, after a period of time, God came to give man the law. The law of God was written and enacted according to His righteousness. Since God is righteous, every item of the law enacted by Him is righteous, and every item is a righteous requirement; hence, the law becomes the law of righteousness (Rom. 8:4a; 9:31).

Therefore, concerning all that God wants to do for man according to His

heart's desire, there is a great need judicially. All that God wants to do for man organically according to His life requires that God redeem the fallen sinners back judicially according to His righteous requirement. God's righteousness requires that God redeem the sinners. It is as if God's righteousness says to God, "O God, it is good that You love them, and it is also good that You desire to carry out many things in them organically. But You must first redeem them to satisfy the requirements of Your righteous law." This is redemption. By redeeming the sinners judicially, God may freely do as He pleases by His life organically according to His heart's desire. "To do as one pleases" does not sound very positive. How can we say that God may do as He pleases? Yes, indeed, because of His redemption, today our God may do as He pleases. If He wants to save a robber, He may do so; if He wants to save a prostitute, He may also do so. Hence, in the Bible we see a robber saved (Luke 23:39-43) and we also see harlots saved (Matt. 21:31 32; cf. Luke 7:37; John 4:17-18). Today God truly may do as He pleases. Thus, God's complete salvation comprises the redemption required judicially and the salvation accomplished through God's life organically. We need to distinguish between these three things: God's redemption, which is judicial; God's salvation, which is organic; and God's complete salvation, which is the totality of God's redemption and God's salvation. (The Organic Aspect of God's Salvation, pp. 10-14)

THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S JUDICIAL REQUIREMENT AS THE PROCEDURE AND THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF WHAT GOD WANTS TO DO ORGANICALLY AS THE PURPOSE

In the complete salvation of God, what He does in the judicial aspect is the procedure, and what He does in the organic aspect is the purpose. In the aspect of procedure, that which God has fulfilled according to his judicial requirement is redemption, including forgiveness of sins, washing away of sins, justification, reconciliation to God, and positional sanctification. We were sinners under God's condemnation and also enemies of God, but now we have been forgiven, washed from our sins,

justified by God, reconciled to God, and sanctified unto God positionally. This is to be redeemed. However, the complete salvation of God is not just this much. If you have received only these five items of redemption, what you have received is but a one-sided salvation and not the complete salvation. The first aspect of God's complete salvation is the judicial aspect, and what it accomplished is for us to be forgiven of our sins, washed from our sins, justified, reconciled to God, and sanctified positionally. These five items qualify and position us to enter into the grace of God. Romans 5:2 says, "We have obtained access…into this grace in which we stand." How can a sinner obtain access into the grace of God? There must be the fulfillment of the judicial aspect so that the sinner may receive forgiveness of sins, washing away of sins, justification by God, reconciliation to God, and positional sanctification. All of these items are a matter of procedure, qualification, and position. The judicial aspect qualifies and positions us sinners to enter into the grace of God to enjoy the salvation which God has accomplished for us according to His life organically in the aspect of purpose (Rom. 5:10). Here we see that God has accomplished a salvation with two aspects: the redeeming aspect and the saving aspect. Redemption is accomplished judicially, and saving is carried out organically. (pp. 9-14)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, describe briefly the condition of man before his salvation.

2. Describe briefly the two aspects of God's complete salvation.

3. According to the Bible, describe briefly God's judicial redemption.

LESSON FOURTEEN

THE ORGANIC SALVATION OF GOD

Scripture Reading:

John 3:6b-7 …and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Go not marvel that I said to you, you must be born anew.

Rom. 5:10b Much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled.

2Cor. 3:17-18 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Rom. 8:29-30 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers; and those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. The purpose of God's salvation: to accomplish all that God wants to achieve in the believers in His economy through His divine life—Rom. 1:17b; Acts 11:18; Rom. 5:10b; 17b, 18b, 21b.

Rom. 1:17b …"But the righteous shall have life and live by faith."

Acts 11:18 And when they heard these things, they became silent and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also God has given repentance unto life.

Rom. 5:10b …Much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled.

Rom. 5:17b …Much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Rom. 5:18b …So also it was through one righteous act unto justification of life to all men.

Rom. 5:21b …So also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

II. Through the life of Christ for the believers to be transformed and to grow and mature in the life of God is the fulfillment of God's

salvation.

III. Eight steps of God's organic salvation:

A. Regeneration is the center of God's complete salvation and the commencement of God's salvation in its organic aspect:

1. It being to regenerate and re-create the believers in their spirit through the Spirit of God—John 3:6b.

John 3:6b …And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

2. Through God's Word of life—1 Pet. 1:23.

1 Pet. 1:23 Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God.

3. For the believers to have the spiritual life of God in addition to their natural life—John 3:15.

John 3:15 That every one who believes into Him may have eternal life.

B. Shepherding being the second step of the Triune God's organic salvation:

1. Shepherding including feeding—1 Pet. 2:2, John 21:15-17, Eph. 4:12; 1 Pet. 5:1-4

1 Pet. 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation.

John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.

John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.

John 21:17 He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.

Eph. 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

1 Pet. 5:1 Therefore the elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory to be revealed:

1 Pet. 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through

base means but eagerly;

1 Pet. 5:3 Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.

1 Pet. 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

2. The Lord being the life and the good Shepherd—John 14:6, 10:9-11, 14-16.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 10:9 I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved and shall go in and go out and shall find pasture.

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.

John 10:11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

John 10:14 I am the good Shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me,

John 10:15 Even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

John 10:16 And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd.

3. The Lord being the Chief Shepherd and the great Shepherd—1 Pet. 2:25, 5:4; Heb. 13:20; Rev. 7:16-17.

1 Pet. 2:25 For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Pet. 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Heb. 13:20 Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant.

Rev. 7:16 They will not hunger any more, neither will they thirst any more, neither will the sun beat upon them, nor any heat;

Rev. 7:17 For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and guide them to springs of waters of life; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

C. Dispositional sanctification being for the believers to be sanctified in their disposition that they may partake of God's holy nature and be one with God in this attribute of Him—Rom. 15:16:

Rom. 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring

priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

1. Through the sanctifying work in the believers by the Spirit of life—Rom. 8:2.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

2. This aspect of sanctification implying transformation—Rom. 6:19, 22.

Rom. 6:19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification.

Rom. 6:22 But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life.

3. Both the positional sanctification in the judicial aspect and the dispositional sanctification in the organic aspect of God's salvation being ultimately manifested in the New Jerusalem for it to become the holy city—Rev. 21:2, 10; 22:19.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

Rev. 22:19 And if anyone takes away from the words of the scroll of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city, which are written in this scroll.

D. Renewing being the spontaneous renewing in the believers spiritual life when they are sanctified dispositionally by the Holy Spirit:

1. Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind—Rom. 12:2a

Rom. 12:2a And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind…

2. To be renewed in the mind is to get rid of all the old concepts concerning the things of the human life and be made new again by the teaching of the holy Scriptures and the enlightening of the Holy

Spirit.

3. Such a renewing of the mind issuing in the transformation of the believers in their spiritual life.

E. Transformation is not an outward change or correction but the metabolic function of the life of God in the believers:

1. By the believers' turning to the Lord and thereby removing the various kinds of veils of their old concepts—2 Cor. 3:16.

2 Cor. 3:16 But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

2. Even more, by the believers with an unveiled face, beholding the Lord and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image as the Lord from one level of glory to another level of glory for the Lord's expression—2 Cor. 3:18.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

3. This is from the Lord Spirit, that is, Christ as the life-giving Spirit—2 Cor. 3:17-18.

2 Cor. 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

F. Building is the God-men's being joined and knit together with other God-men in the divine life by their growth in the diving life:

1. Being brought forth through the joining and knitting by the transforming Spirit—Eph. 4:15-16.

Eph. 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

Eph. 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

2. The building up of the Body of Christ in the New Testament is this kind of building up by being joined and knit together in the divine

life, and its purpose is to consummate the building of the holy city, the New Jerusalem.

G. Conformation is the consummation of the believer's transformation in life, and it is also to be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:29:

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

1. God's firstborn Son being Christ as the God-Man.

2. To be conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son being that the believers' become full-grown in life as God-men:

a. To be conformed to Christ death in all things through the power of His resurrection—Phil. 3:10.

Phil. 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

b. To live Christ for magnifying Him through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (who is the God-man)—Phil. 1:19-21a.

Phil. 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Phil. 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.

Phil. 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ…

c. This is to be the reprints of the God-man, that the believers may be exactly like Him, the firstborn Son of God—1 John 3:2.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is.

H. Glorification being the spreading forth of Christ's glory from the believers by their growing to maturity in Christ's life—Rom. 8:30:

Rom. 8:30 And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

1. Being the entering into the glory of God—Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:10; 1 Thes. 2:12.

Heb. 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

1 Pet. 5:10 But the God of all grace, He who has called you into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself perfect, establish, strengthen, and ground you.

1 Thes. 2:12 So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

2. Being also the believers' enjoyment of the redemption of their bodies—Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30.

Rom. 8:23 And not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body.

Eph. 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.

3. Being also the ultimate consummation of God's complete salvation in the believers.

IV. The ultimate consummation of God's complete salvation being the New Jerusalem—the crystallization of the union and mingling of God with man, the processed and consummated Triune God with His regenerated, transformed, conformed and glorified tripartite elect.

REFERENCE

The Organic Aspect of God's Salvation, Chs. 1-5.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S SALVATION

The organic aspect of God's salvation is through the life of God (Rom. 1:17; Acts 11:18; Rom. 5:10b, 17b, 18b, 21b). Whereas the judicial aspect is according to the righteousness of God to accomplish God's redemption, the organic aspect is through the life of God to carry out God's salvation, including regeneration, shepherding, dispositional sanctification, renewing,

transformation, building up, conformation, and glorification. This is the purpose of God's salvation to accomplish all that God wants to achieve in the believers in His economy through His divine life. (The Organic Aspect of God's Salvation, p.16)

EIGHT STEPS OF GOD'S ORGANIC SALVATION

Regeneration

After we repented and believed in the Lord, our sins were forgiven and we were reconciled to God. Then this God who loves us and who is the life-giving Spirit comes into us to regenerate our spirit. John 3 refers to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He respectfully addressed the Lord Jesus as One who had come from God as a teacher to Israel, and he therefore came to get some advice from Him. However, the Lord Jesus said to him, "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (v.3). Nicodemus did not understand the meaning of regeneration. He thought that regeneration was for a man to enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born. So he said to the Lord Jesus, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"(v.4). However, the regeneration which the Lord Jesus referred to was for one to be born of water (that is, death) and the Spirit (that is, life) (v.5). Then the Lord went on to say, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (v.6). The first Spirit is the divine Spirit, referring to God. God is Spirit. When we are born of Him, we are born of the Spirit and eventually, we are spirit, the second spirit referred to in John 3:6. This is to be regenerated.

First Peter 1:23 says, "Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God." This shows us that regeneration is through God's word of life. A great majority of the regenerated ones were regenerated through the word of God. The word of God as a gene enters into us and operates in us. In this way we were regenerated.

John 1:12-13 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the

authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This portion tells us that the way to be regenerated is to receive the Lord Jesus by believing into Him. He is the Word from God (1:1), and He is also the light from God (v. 9). When we receive Him, we have the authority to become children of God. This authority is nothing other than the life of God. God gives us His life as our authority that we may become children of God. Hence, we are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. This is regeneration, which is a great matter.

Therefore, we may say that regeneration is the center of God's complete salvation and the commencement of God's salvation in its organic aspect. It is God Himself as the Spirit coming into our spirit to make us alive. In other words, we are regenerated, made alive, in our spirit by the Spirit of God. This is regeneration. (pp. 26-28)

Shepherding

Shepherding includes feeding, as the nursing mother feeds the baby for the baby to grow, as mentioned in 1 Peter 2:2. In this way the Lord commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His flock on His behalf (John 21:15-17). He also raised up those such as Peter to be His deputy shepherds to feed His lambs and shepherd His flock (Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

The Gospel of John tells us not only that the Lord is the life (11:25; 14:6) but also that the Lord is the good Shepherd who came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (10:10-11). He Himself is also our pasture for us to eat freely of Him and be nourished by Him (10:9). Furthermore, the Gospel of John tells us that the Lord as the good Shepherd would lay down His life to form the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers into one flock under the shepherding of Himself as the one Shepherd (10:14-16).

The believers throughout the generations have been under the

shepherding of the Lord as the good Shepherd (1 Pet. 2:25). As the Chief Shepherd (5:4) and the great Shepherd of God's flock (Heb. 13:20), He will shepherd us for eternity as the Lamb of God and guide us to springs of waters of life for us to have eternal satisfaction, without thirst or hunger (Rev. 7:16-17). By this He accomplishes a great part of God's organic salvation.

We all were regenerated and are under the shepherding of the Lord as the good Shepherd. Thus, we partake of God's life and are nourished and grow unto maturity in it (Eph. 4:13b; Col. 1:28), manifesting the function of God's life in us for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy and the achievement of God's eternal purpose. (p. 32-33)

Sanctification

Before we were saved, we were altogether in the world. After we were saved and regenerated, the Lord completely separated us to make us holy. This is positional sanctification, …but it is not sufficient to be separated and made holy unto God positionally. After we are sanctified positionally and reconciled to God, as we begin to pursue in life, we will sense something within us which is not our disposition but God's nature. This nature within us deals thoroughly with our natural disposition, our peculiar disposition, and our temperament so that the divine nature becomes our disposition. This is to sanctify the believers dispositionally that they may partake of God's holy nature and be one with God in this attribute of His (Rom. 15:16). This kind of sanctification uses the element of God's life as the material and is carried out through the sanctifying work in the believers by the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2).

Brothers and sisters, do we regulate ourselves with outward regulations? Do we live and walk according to the holy nature of God or according to outward regulations? Today we do not need these outward regulations; we need only God's holy nature, which is able to make us holy. For example, concerning women's apparel, the Bible gives us only a word saying that women should adorn themselves in proper clothing (1 Tim. 2:9). But what

kind of clothing is considered proper? The divine nature within you will tell you. This is dispositional sanctification; this is the organic work which Christ as the Spirit is carrying out in us. It is not something judicial; it is something altogether organic. This aspect of sanctification implies transformation (Rom. 6:19, 22) for the fulfillment of God's purpose in choosing the believers (Eph. 1:4). Eventually, both the positional sanctification in the judicial aspect and the dispositional sanctification in the organic aspect of God's complete salvation will ultimately be manifested in the New Jerusalem for it to become the holy city (Rev. 21:2, 10; 22:19). (pp. 41-43)

Renewing

Romans 12:2a says, "Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind." We should not be fashioned according to this age. …The renewing taught by the Scriptures is the renewing of the mind; it is altogether a matter related to the mind. The mind is our mentality, our philosophy, our religious concepts, our views concerning people and things, etc.

How can our mind be renewed that our whole being may be renewed? The way of renewing lies in prayer and in reading the Scriptures, because for us to be renewed in our mind is for us to get rid of all our old concepts concerning the things of the human life and be made new again by the teaching of the holy Scriptures and the enlightening of the Holy Spirit. …In this way, your view is different and your being is renewed.

Such a renewing of the mind issues in the transformation of the believers in their spiritual life. Titus 3:5 refers to the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. …When our mind is renewed, our whole being is transformed. This is to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. The washing of regeneration purges away all the things in the old nature of our old man, whereas the renewing of the Holy Spirit dispenses the new things, the divine essence of the new man, into our being. Through this we turn from the old condition in which we were

into a completely new condition, from the state of the old creation into the state of the new creation. (pp. 45-44)

Transformation

Transformation is not an outward change or correction but the metabolic function of the life of God in the believers. Transformation is not to make some corrections from without; it is the function of metabolism from within and is manifested without. …If the believers are willing to grow in the divine life, the element of the divine life will increase in them and bring forth a metabolic change. Thus, their inward disposition will be transformed, and their outward image will also be transformed to be the same as the image of the Lord. This is not moral cultivation by examining oneself and mending one's ways as taught by Confucianism in China. That is man's own moral cultivation. When we are transformed into the image of the Lord by beholding Him, this is not the result of our self-cultivation, but it is the Lord Spirit, the life-giving Spirit whom the Lord Christ became in His resurrection, who moves within us to bring forth a metabolic change through the increase of the element of the divine life in us (2 Cor. 3:18). This is altogether a transformation brought forth by the moving and working of the Lord Spirit and the divine life within us. (pp. 52-53)

Building Up

The transformation of the believers in the divine life causes them to be joined and knit together with other believers as fellow members of Christ because of their growth in the divine life. This joining and knitting together becomes the building of the God-men with other God-men in the divine life.

This building in the divine life is the building of the jasper wall of the holy city, the New Jerusalem, which is not the result of piling a piece of jasper upon another piece of jasper, but the issue of the joining of all the jasper stones by the transforming Spirit. This building is also the building referred to in Ephesians 4:15-16 as the issue of the believers' growing into the Head, Christ, in all things, that is, "all the Body, being joined together

and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love."

The building up of the Body of Christ mentioned in the New Testament is the building up by being joined and knit together in the divine life. This kind of building which is first carried out in the Body of Christ will consummate the building of the holy city, the New Jerusalem. (p 56-57)

Conformation

How can we be conformed to the image of God's Firstborn? To know how to be conformed to the image of God's Firstborn, we must understand how God's Firstborn lived on earth. The firstborn Son of God is both the Son of God and the Son of Man. He is the God-man, and He lived the life of a man on earth. The life which He lived on earth was the very life which God desired man to live when He created man. After the fall, man was not able to live the life which God wanted man to live. Hence, the only begotten Son of God came to become the Son of Man. In the four Gospels, from beginning to end, the Lord called Himself the Son of Man (Matt. 8:20; 26:64); He lived as a man on earth. He lived as a man daily under the shadow of the cross, denying and crucifying Himself daily. He told people that none of the words which He spoke was spoken by Himself and none of the things which He did was done out of His own desire (John 8:28-29; 14:10). He spoke words and did things according to His Father's will. By doing this He fulfilled what God required judicially. This was why He was qualified to die for us on the cross. In Hid human living on earth for thirty-three and a half years, the Lord Jesus was tested and tried by God. Eventually, according to God's requirement of righteousness judicially, He was qualified to go to the cross to bear our sins and die for us. God considered Him a sinner, even sin (2 Cor. 5:21), and condemned Him on the cross. His death was altogether a judicial matter for the accomplishment of God's requirement of righteousness judicially. This was what He did as the Son of Man. The crucified life which He lived on earth as the Son of Man became a mold; we

should be conformed to such a mold (Phil. 3:10b).

In summary, conformation is the consummation of the believers' transformation in life, and it is also to be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God, who is Christ as the God-man. To be conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son is the believers' becoming full-grown in life as God-men. This is to be conformed to His death in all things through the resurrection power of Christ (Phil. 3:10) and to live Christ for magnifying Him through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the God-man (Phil. 1:19-21a). This is to be the reprints of the God-man, Christ, that we may be exactly like Him, the firstborn Son of God (1 John 3:2).

Glorification

To be glorified is to enter into glory. After passing through regeneration, shepherding, dispositional sanctification, renewing, transformation, building up, and conformation to the image of the firstborn Son of God, the believers are mature and qualified to be raptured, and they are simply awaiting the Lord's coming back. When the Lord comes back, they will enter into glory to enjoy the highest portion of the divine sonship (Rom. 8:23). Hence, glorification is the spreading forth of Christ's glory from the believers by their growing to maturity in Christ's life. We may say that glorification is the manifestation of the glory of the firstborn Son of God from within us, or that it is our entering into glory (Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:10; 1 Thes. 2:12). This glory is the Triune God. Hence, to enter into glory is to enter into the Triune God. When our entire being enters into the Triune God, we are glorified. Glorification is also the believers' enjoyment of the redemption of their body (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30). This is also the ultimate consummation of God's complete salvation in the believers. At this point, God's organic work has been completed.

THE ULTIMATE CONSUMMATION OF GOD'S COMPLETE SALVATION BEING THE NEW JERUSALEM

God's organic work is from regeneration to glorification, from God's

entering into man to man's practically being brought into God. Regeneration is God entering into man, whereas glorification is man entering into God. Thus, man is altogether mingled and joined with God to express the image of God. That is glorification. The ultimate consummation of God's complete salvation is the New Jerusalem—the crystallization of the union and mingling of God with man, the processed and consummated Triune God with His regenerated, transformed, conformed, and glorified tripartite elect. (pp. 71-74)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, explain by what means does God carry out His organic salvation.

2. According to the Bible, describe briefly the eight steps of God's organic salvation.

3. What is the ultimate consummation of God's complete salvation?

LESSON FIFTEEN

THE DISPENSING OF THE TRIUNE GOD INTO THE TRIPARTITE MAN

Scripture Reading:

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Rom. 8:6b ...But the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Rom. 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. The three parts of man and its purpose:

A. Three parts of man—spirit, soul, and body—1Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12.

1 Thes. 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

B. The three parts of the spirit—conscience, fellowship, and intuition:

1. Conscience—for us to discern right from wrong, to justify or to condemn—Rom. 9:1, 8:16.

Rom. 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit.

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

2. Fellowship—for us to contact God and to commune with God—John 4:24; Rom. 1:9.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

Rom. 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers.

3. Intuition—a direct sense or feeling in our spirit—1 Cor. 2:11.

1 Cor. 2:11 For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God.

C. The three parts of the soul—mind, emotion, and will:

1. Mind—for thinking, considering, knowing, and remembering—Psa. 13:2, 139:14; Lam. 3:20.

Psa. 13:2 How long will I bear concern in my soul And sorrow in my heart day after day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Psa. 139:14 I will praise You, for I am awesomely and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, And my soul knows it well.

Lam. 3:20 My soul remembers them well And is bowed down within me.

2. Emotion—for us to love—1 Sam. 18:1; S. S. 1:7.

1 Sam. 18:1 Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan became knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him like his own soul.

S.S. 1:7 Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock? / Where do you make it lie down at noon? / For why should I be like one who is veiled / Beside the flocks of your companions?

3. Will—through which we have our purposes and choices and make decisions—Job 7:15, 6:7; 1 Chron. 22:19.

Job 7:15 So that my soul would choose strangulation And death rather than my bones.

Job 6:7 My soul refuses to touch them; They are like putrid food to me.

1 Chron. 22:19 Now set your heart and your soul to seek after Jehovah your God; and arise and build the sanctuary of Jehovah God, in order to bring the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah and all the holy vessels of God to the house that is to be built for the name of Jehovah.

D. The purposes of the parts of man:

1. The purpose of the body—for our existence, and for us to contact

the things of the material realm—1 Cor. 6:13.

1 Cor. 6:13 Foods are for the stomach, and the stomach for foods; but God will bring to nought both it and them. But the body is not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

2. The purpose of the soul—mainly to reflect and express the Lord, and for us to contact the things of psychological realm—2 Cor. 3:18

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

3. The purpose of the spirit—to touch, receive and contain the Lord, and for us to contact the things of the spiritual world—John 4:24; 1 Cor. 6:17, 2 Tim. 4:22.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

1 Cor. 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

2 Tim. 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

II. The processed Triune God consummated to become the law of the Spirit of life:

A. The Spirit of life being the compound Spirit—Exo. 30:23-25.

Exo.30:23 You also take the finest spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred fifty shekels, and of fragrant calamus two hundred fifty shekels,

Exo. 30:24 And of cassia five hundred shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil.

Exo. 30:25 And you shall make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded according to the perfumer's art; it shall be a holy anointing oil.

B. The Law of the Spirit of life being the ultimate consummation of the Triune God, having the natural life-capacity with the spontaneous life-power—Rom. 8:2.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

III. The operation and the dispensing of the Triune God in the three parts of the believers:

A. Beginning from the believers' spirit—Rom. 8:9-10:

Rom. 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God

dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.

Rom. 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

1. By God's Spirit dwelling in the believers.

2. The Spirit of Christ, that is, the pneumatic Christ, making home in the believers' spirit.

3. That the believers, though dead in their bodies because of sin, may have their spirits become life because of righteousness.

B. Continuing in the believers' soul:

1. By the believers setting the mind of their soul on the spirit—the mind set on the spirit is life—Rom. 8:6b.

Rom. 8:6b But the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

2. That the divine dispensing that dwells in the believers' spirit may spread into the believers' soul, that their mind may be transformed and their soul renewed—Rom. 12:2b.

Rom. 12:2b But be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

C. Consummated in the believers' body—Rom. 8:11:

Rom. 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

1. By the Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead dwelling in the believers' spirit and soul.

2. That He who raised Christ from the dead may spread His divine dispensing into the believers' body through His indwelling Spirit.

3. That the believers' mortal body may also receive the supply and saturation of the divine life.

REFERENCE

The Parts of Man, Ch. 1; A Deeper Study of the Divine Dispensing, Chs. 3-4.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE THREE PARTS OF MAN AND ITS PURPOSE

The Three Parts of Man—Spirit, Soul, and Body

A very important verse in the New Testament is 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Man is of three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the body. It is easy to confuse the spirit with the soul. Some people have thought that the spirit and the soul are synonymous terms. But the Spirit of God states clearly in His Word that the spirit and the soul are two different entities and that there are three parts to our human being. These are joined by two conjunctions: "spirit and soul and body." It is also this way in the Greek text. Through grammatical construction clearly shows that the spirit differs from the soul just as the soul differs from the body. The soul is not the body; neither is the spirit the soul. These are three distinct parts of one human being.

The order used by the Holy Spirit in this verse is very important. The first part mentioned is the spirit, then the soul, then the body. Outwardly we have a body, and inwardly we have the spirit. Between these two, as a medium, is the soul. From the inside to the outside are the spirit, the soul, and the body. From the outside to the inside are the body, the soul, and the spirit.

Another verse which shows these three parts of our being and the distinction between them is Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." The soul and spirit are not one entity, since this verse indicates that they can be divided asunder. The soul is the soul and the spirit is the spirit, and these two can be separated just as the marrow can be separated from the joints. The marrow is within the joints; yet the marrow is not the joints, neither

are the joints the marrow. They pertain to the physical body and are mentioned with the spirit and the soul. So in this verse we have again these three parts—the spirit, the soul, and the body. (The Parts of Man, pp. 5-6)

The Three Parts of the Spirit—Conscience, Fellowship, and Intuition

Just as our body has many parts, so does our spirit and our soul. Our spirit is composed of three: conscience, fellowship, and intuition. The conscience is for us to discern right from wrong, to justify or to condemn. Romans 9:1 compared with Romans 8:16 proves that the conscience is a part of our spirit. Fellowship is for us to contact God and to commune with God. This is shown in John 4:24 and Romans 1:9. Intuition means to have a direct sense or feeling in our spirit, regardless of reason or circumstance. First Corinthians 2:11 indicates that our spirit can know what our soul cannot. Our soul knows by reason or by circumstance, but our spirit can perceive without these. This is intuition, the direct sense in our spirit.

The Three Parts of the Soul—Mind, Emotion, and Will

The soul is also of three parts. The main one, the mind, is for thinking, considering (Psa. 13:2), knowing (Psa. 139:14), and remembering (Lam. 3:20). In the mind we have thoughts, ideas, concepts, reasonings, understanding, knowledge, etc. Emotion, another part of the soul, is for us to love (1 Sam. 18:1; S.S. 1:7) or hate (2 Sam. 5:8), to like or dislike, to be joyful (Isa. 61:10; Psa. 86:4) or grieved (1 Sam. 30:6; Judg. 10:16). All our emotional feelings, positive or negative, are in this part of our soul. The will is also a part of the soul. It is the part through which we have our purposes and choices (Job 7:15; 6:7) and make decisions (1 Chron. 22:19). When I consider or reason, I am using the mind. When I feel happy or sorrowful, I am in the emotion. When I make a decision to do a certain thing, the will is in operation. The mind, the emotion, and the will are the three parts of the soul.

Psalm 51:6 reveals that within our being are “the inward parts” and “the

hidden part." Hebrews 8:10 compared with Jeremiah 31:33 proves that the mind is one of "the inward parts." The rest of "the inward parts" must be the emotion and the will. Therefore, all the parts of our soul are "the inward parts" of our being, while our spirit is "the hidden part."

The Purposes of the Parts of Man

The purpose of our body is our human existence. It is by our body that we may exist and live physically and practically for the Lord. Our body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for our body (1 Cor. 6:13). The Lord prepares us a body (Heb. 10:5) that we may exist and live for Him. Thus, we must offer our body to the Lord (Rom. 12:1) and glorify Him in our body (1 Cor. 6:20).

The purpose of our heart in God's intention is that it may love Him. Mark 12:30 says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Our heart is a loving organ, prepared by God for us to love Him. The purpose of our spirit is to contact the Lord (John 4:24), to receive Him (1 Cor. 6:17), and to contain Him (2 Tim. 4:22). Our heart is the loving organ, whereas our spirit is the contacting, receiving, and containing organ. The Lord whom our heart loves is contacted, received, and contained by our spirit. What then is the purpose of our soul? Its main purpose is to reflect and express the Lord. Second Corinthians 3:18, in the original text, has the thought of reflecting. Our soul, that is our person or our personality, must be the very organ, as a mirror, to reflect and express the Lord. Thus, we love the Lord with our heart; we contact, receive, and contain Him with our spirit; and we reflect and express Him with our soul in all that we think, like, and decide—in all that we are and all that we do. (pp. 7-10)

THE PROCESSED TRIUNE GOD CONSUMMATED TO BECOME THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

The Spirit of Life Being the Compound Spirit

Exodus 30:23-25 speaks of the compound holy ointment. The compound holy ointment is composed of one hin of olive oil with four spices. The one

hin of oil signifies the unique God. Olive oil signifies the Spirit of God flowing out through the pressing of the death of Christ. It is the base of the ointment, and it is the basic ingredient in which the spices are mingled. The four spices signify humanity in God's creation with the precious death of Christ, the sweetness and effectiveness of His death, the resurrection of Christ, and the power and fragrance of resurrection, respectively. Hence, this compound ointment signifies the Spirit produced out of the Lord's death and resurrection. In this Spirit, there is divinity, humanity, the Lord's death, resurrection, and His redemption. The supplying element of this compound Spirit is both bountiful and excellent (Phil. 1:19b).

The Law of the Spirit of Life
Being the Ultimate Consummation of the Triune God

Today, we the sinners need only to repent, believe in the Lord Jesus, and call on His name. The all-inclusive, compound, life-giving Spirit will enter into us to be our life, and there will be a wonderful change. By this, we will be regenerated. We will no longer be ourselves, but we will have the Lord Jesus within us. Before we are saved, we are just our own selves, Malaysian or Chinese. But after we are saved, though we may still look like the same persons, actually, within us, another One is added, who is the Lord Jesus.

As far as our natural constitution goes, we are all different from one another. There are the Malaysians, the Chinese, and the Americans. But after we have believed in the Lord and been saved, as for as the inner man goes, we are all the same; we are all people with God within us. God is the Spirit, life, and also the law within us. Now, within every Christian there is a law, which is the law of the all-inclusive and life-giving Spirit produced through the Triune God passing through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. This law of the Spirit of life is the ultimate consummation of the Triune God (Rev. 22:17a).

The law of the Spirit of life in Romans 8 has a capacity which operates in us daily to revive us and to allow us to overcome. …If you truly present yourselves to God and cooperate with Him, in your daily life you will

realize that you are in Christ, and that there is a law operating within you. This law has a natural life-capacity and a spontaneous life-power. (A Deeper Study of the Divine Dispensing, p. 44-46)

THE OPERATION AND THE DISPENSING OF THE LAW OF THE TRIUNE GOD IN THE THREE PARTS OF THE BELIEVERS

How does the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—work Himself into the tripartite man of spirit, soul, and body? First, Christ enters into our spirit and makes our spirit alive. At this time our soul still is still dead because of sin. Next, if we set our mind on the spirit continually, the Spirit will enter into our mind, so that our mind will be filled with the Spirit and will become the divine life. In this way, not only our spirit will have life; our mind also will have life. Finally, He who raised Christ from among the dead will give life to our mortal body through the Spirit of resurrection, who dwells in us, so that we will have life also in our body. First, there is life in the spirit. Then there is life in our soul. Finally, there is life for our body. This is how the Triune God dispenses Himself into the tripartite man. This is also the greatest and the most profound mystery in the universe.

This work of putting the Triune God Himself into us is dispensing. This dispensing is not at all rough; rather, it is very refined and tender. As long as you confess that you are a sinner and believe in the Lord Jesus, this Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—will enter into you to be your life and everything. If you are a husband, He will become the love with which you love your wife. If you are a wife, He will become the submission with which you submit to your husband. You can love your wife because of Jesus, and you can submit to your husband because of Jesus. Your humility, gentleness, and patience are all Jesus. Jesus has become you all.

Moreover, through His dispensing within you, you will gradually realize that He is your Head. Before Him you are just like a wife. You will understand that He is your Lord, that only He has the real sovereignty over you. This Triune God who is within you is your life and everything. He is

also your Head, your Husband, and your Lord. Moreover, He is your law, the law of the Spirit of life. This law is a tremendous thing. When you see an electric fan turning, you know that there is a law of electricity operating within the electric fan. Electricity is transmitted from the power plant to the house and is then connected to the electric fan. There is also a switch. When you want the fan to turn, you do not need to turn it with a bamboo pole. You only need to turn on the switch; the fan will immediately turn and the cool wind will come.

As a Christian today, do you live the Christian life by "turning the fan with a bamboo pole," or are you "turning on the switch" to allow the fan to turn by itself? Some have prayed much for the Lord to help them and to strengthen them so that they can honor their parents and control their temper. Actually, this kind of prayer is like turning the fan with a bamboo pole. Have you seen that you no longer need to turn the fan with the pole? You need to see that one fact has been accomplished—that the electricity from the power plant has been installed into this house. The electric fan is here. The switch is installed. There is no need for you to do anything else. You only need to turn on the switch, and the fan will turn. (pp. 62-64)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, state the three parts of man and their purposes.

2. How does the Triune God work Himself into man?

3. How does the law of the Spirit of life operate and dispense into the three parts of the believers?

LESSON SIXTEEN

THE SEVEN ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 3:9-11 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, in order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, according to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Tim. 3:15 But is I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

Eph. 1:22-23 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Eph. 5:22-23 Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord; for a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the Body.

Hymn: 1226

OUTLINE

I. The church—the hidden mystery in God's eternal economy:

A. God's eternal economy (eternal plan, eternal purpose)—Eph. 3:11:

Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. Of God's will—Eph. 1:5, 9, 3:11.

Eph. 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself.

Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. According to God's good pleasure (God's heart pleasure), which He purposed in Himself—Eph. 1:9; John 3:16.

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.

3. Made in Christ—Eph. 3:11, 1:9.

Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself.

B. The mystery of Christ—Eph. 3:4:

Eph. 3:4 By which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ.

1. From the ages hidden in God who created all things—Eph. 3:9.

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.

2. Not made known to the sons of men in other generations—Eph. 3:5a.

Eph. 3:5a Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men.

3. Revealed to the apostles and prophets in their spirit by revelation in the New Testament age—Eph. 3:5b.

Eph. 3:5 As it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit.

4. To make the multifarious wisdom of God known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies—Eph. 3:10.

Eph. 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church.

5. Through the church—Eph. 3:10.

II. The statuses of the church:

A. The called out assembly—Matt. 16:17-18.

Matt. 16:17 And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father

who is in the heavens.

Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

B. The house of God—1 Tim. 3:15-16; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 4:17:

1 Tim. 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

Heb. 3:6 But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house, whose house we are if indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end.

1 Pet. 4:17 For it is time for the judgment to begin from the house of God; and if first from us, what will be the end of those who disobey the gospel of God?

1. The dwelling place of God.

2. The household of God.

3. The pillar and base of the truth.

4. The manifestation of God in the flesh.

C. The kingdom of God—Rom. 14:17.

Rom. 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

D. The Body of Christ—Eph. 1:22-23:

Eph. 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

1. Composed of the members.

2. Baptized in the one Spirit.

3. Constituted with the unsearchable riches of Christ.

4. With Christ as the head.

5. With the individual Christ to be the corporate Christ.

6. To be the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

E. The counterpart of Christ—Eph. 5:22-23:

Eph. 5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord;

Eph. 5:23 For a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the Body.

1. **A great mystery with regard to Christ and the church.**
2. **The church as the bride (the wife), of Christ as the bridegroom, the husband.**
3. **To be married at Christ's coming back.**
4. **To be consummated the New Jerusalem.**
5. **To be a couple in eternity.**
6. **Typified by Eve as the counterpart of Adam.**

F. The new man—Eph. 2:15, 4:24:

Eph. 2:15 Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace.

Eph. 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.

1. **Created by Christ—Eph. 2:15.**

Eph. 2:15 Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace.

2. **In the new man there is no room for Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man.**
3. **Christ being all the members and in all the members.**
4. **To be put on by the believers.**

G. The golden lampstands—Rev. 1:20b:

Rev. 1:20b …And the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

1. **The lampstand typifying Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God—Exo. 25.**

Exo. 25:1 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,

Exo. 25:2 Tell the children of Israel to take for Me a heave offering. From every man whose heart makes him willing you shall take My heave offering.

Exo. 25:3 And this is the heave offering which you shall take from them: gold and silver and bronze,

Exo. 25:4 And blue and purple and scarlet strands, and fine linen, and goats' hair,

Exo. 25:5 And rams' skins dyed red, and porpoise skins, and acacia wood,

Exo. 25:6 Oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense,

Exo. 25:7 Onyx stones and stones to be set for the ephod and for the breastplate.
Exo. 25:8 And let them make a sanctuary for Me that I may dwell in their midst;
Exo. 25:9 According to all that I show you, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, even so shall you make it.
Exo. 25:10 And they shall make an ark of acacia wood: two and a half cubits shall be its length; and one and a half cubits, its width; and one and a half cubits, its height.
Exo. 25:11 And you shall overlay it with pure gold; inside and outside you shall overlay it; and you shall make a rim of gold upon it all around.
Exo. 25:12 And you shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them on its four feet; and two rings shall be on one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it.
Exo. 25:13 And you shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold.
Exo. 25:14 And you shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the Ark to carry the Ark with them.
Exo. 25:15 The poles shall be in the rings of the Ark; they shall not be taken from it.
Exo. 25:16 And you shall put into the Ark the Testimony which I shall give you.
Exo. 25:17 And you shall make an expiation cover of pure gold: two and a half cubits shall be its length, and one and a half cubits, its width.
Exo. 25:18 And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of beaten work you shall make them, at the two ends of the expiation cover.
Exo. 25:19 And make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; of one piece with the expiation cover you shall make the cherubim on its two ends.
Exo. 25:20 And the cherubim shall spread out their wings above the cover, covering the expiation cover with their wings, with their faces toward one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the expiation cover.
Exo. 25:21 And you shall put the expiation cover upon the Ark above it, and into the Ark you shall put the Testimony that I shall give you.
Exo. 25:22 And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the expiation cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, of everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.
Exo. 25:23 And you shall make a table of acacia wood: two cubits shall be its length, and a cubit its width, and one and a half cubits its height.
Exo. 25:24 And you shall overlay it with pure gold and make a rim of gold around it.
Exo. 25:25 And you shall make a frame of a handbreadth around it; and you shall

make a rim of gold for its frame around it.

Exo. 25:26 And you shall make for it four rings of gold and put the rings on the four corners that are on its four feet.

Exo. 25:27 The rings shall be close to the frame as holders for the poles to carry the table.

Exo. 25:28 And you shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, and the table shall be carried with them.

Exo. 25:29 And you shall make its plates and its cups and its pitchers and its bowls with which to pour out drink offerings; of pure gold you shall make them.

Exo. 25:30 And you shall set the bread of the Presence upon the table before Me always.

Exo. 25:31 And you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand with its base and its shaft shall be made of beaten work; its cups, its calyxes, and its blossom buds shall be of one piece with it.

Exo. 25:32 And there shall be six branches going out of its sides; three branches of the lampstand out of one of its sides, and three branches of the lampstand out of its other side;

Exo. 25:33 Three cups made like almond blossoms in one branch, a calyx and a blossom bud; and three cups made like almond blossoms in the other branch, a calyx and a blossom bud-so for the six branches going out of the lampstand.

Exo. 25:34 And there shall be on the lampstand four cups made like almond blossoms, its calyxes and its blossom buds;

Exo. 25:35 And a calyx under two branches of one piece with it, and a calyx under two branches of one piece with it, and a calyx under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of the lampstand.

Exo. 25:36 Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it; all of it one beaten work of pure gold.

Exo. 25:37 And you shall make its lamps, seven; and set up its lamps to give light to the area in front of it.

Exo. 25:38 And its tongs and its firepans shall be of pure gold.

Exo. 25:39 It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils.

Exo. 25:40 And see that you make them according to their pattern, which was shown to you in the mountain.

2. The seven golden lampstands signifying the seven local churches as God's testimony in the New Testament—Rev. 1:11-12, 20b.

Rev. 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

Rev. 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands.

Rev. 1:20b And the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

REFERENCE

The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 7, Chs. 189-190, 207-210, 213, 216, 219.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE CHURCH—THE HIDDEN MYSTERY IN GOD'S ETERNAL ECONOMY

God's Eternal Economy

Within Himself God purposed to carry out this desire, to get what He wants, and that became His will. What God wants is the church. From this we can see that the church is God's good pleasure, God's will, God's purpose, and God's oikonomia. Furthermore, all this is a mystery, a hidden, mysterious story. This indicates that the church is a great matter, for the church is God's desire, God's good pleasure. God's will is to have the church, and He has purposed to carry out the desire to have the church which He wants. Therefore based upon His desire, will and purpose, God made a plan, an oikonomia, a household arrangement, a household administration. Therefore, God's economy is His planned administration to carry out His eternal purpose to have the church. God had a desire, a good pleasure, according to which He has a will. Based upon His will, God made a purpose, a determined intent. He then made a plan to administrate His purpose, and this plan is to dispense Himself as life, life supply, and everything into His chosen people. This is the economy of God. (The Conclusion of The New Testament, Vol. 7, p. 2050)

The Mystery of Christ

The mystery of the universe is God. The mystery of God, the New Testament reveals, is Christ (Col. 2:2). The mystery of Christ is the church (Eph. 3:4). Actually these are simply three stages of one mystery. God is to be found in Christ, and Christ is to be found in the church. The church, then, is the mystery of Christ, who in turn is the mystery of God, who Himself is the mystery of the universe. In Ephesians 3:4 Paul speaks of the mystery of Christ. The mystery of God in Colossians 2:2 is Christ, whereas the mystery of Christ in Ephesians 3:4 is the church. God is a mystery, and Christ, as the embodiment of God to express Him, is the mystery of God. Christ is also a mystery, and the church, as the Body of Christ to express Him, is the mystery of Christ. Hence, the church is actually a mystery within a mystery, for the church is a mystery in the third stage. The first stage is God Himself as the mystery of the universe; the second stage is Christ as the mystery of God; and the third stage is the church as the mystery of Christ. (Vol. 7, pp. 2053-2054).

THE STATUSES OF THE CHURCH

The Called Out Assembly

In the Bible the church is first called the assembly. This is revealed by the Lord Jesus Himself in Matthew 16:18, where He speaks concerning the universal aspect of the church, and in 18:17, where He speaks concerning the local aspect of the church. The Greek word translated “church” in these verses is ekklesia, composed of two words: ek, out, and kaleo, called. Put together, these two words mean a called out congregation or an assembly of the called ones. Hence, according to the literal sense of the word, the church is the assembly of those called out of the world by God. In ancient times the mayor of a city would sometimes call the people together as a congregation, as an assembly, for a particular purpose. The Greek word used to denote such a gathering is ekklesia (cf. Acts 19:41). The point we would emphasize here is that the word ekklesia, according to biblical usage, refers to the church as a called out congregation. The church is a congregation called out of the world unto God for His purpose. It is much

better to translate ekklesia not as church but as assembly. The Brethren teachers insisted on this, and the congregations among the Brethren were known as the Brethren assemblies. I agree with their use of the word assembly. (pp. 2215-2216)

The House of God

Three verses which reveal that the church is the house of God are 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6; and 1 Peter 4:17. In 1 Timothy 3:15 Paul says, "If I delay, that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth." As God's dwelling place, the church is both God's house and His household, His family. In the Old Testament the temple and God's people were two separate things, but in the fulfillment in the New Testament the dwelling place and the family are one. According to God's New Testament economy, God's house is His family. Another verse that speaks of the church as the house of God is Hebrews 3:6. This verse refers to "Christ, as a Son over His house, whose house we are." In Old Testament times, the house of God was the house of Israel (Lev. 22:18; Num. 12:7), symbolized by the tabernacle or the temple among them (Exo. 25:8; Ezek. 37:26-27). Today the house of God is the church. The children of Israel, as people of God, are a type of us, the New Testament believers (1 Cor. 9:24-10:11). Their history is a prefigure of the church. The church has a twofold function. To Christ, the church is the Body; to God, the church is the house. Christ is the Head, and the church is the Body of the Head. This is one function of the church. God is the Father, and the church is His house. This is another function of the church. Just as Christ is the Head and the church is His Body, so God is the Father and the church is His house. The church as the Body of Christ is an organism. In like manner, the church as the house of God is a living entity, a living house.

First Peter 4:17, another verse that refers to the church as the house of God, says, "Because it is time for the judgment to begin from the house of God." Here we see that disciplinary judgment begins from God's own house.

God's house, or household, is the church composed of the believers. From his house, as His own house, God begins His governmental administration by His disciplinary judgment over His own children, that He may have strong ground to judge, in His universal kingdom, those who are disobedient to His gospel and rebellious to His government. (pp. 2227-2228)

The Kingdom of God

Ephesians 2:19 says, "You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God." The term "fellow citizens" indicates the kingdom of God. All the believers, both Jewish and Gentile, are citizens of God's kingdom, which is a sphere wherein God exercises His authority. As long as anyone is a believer, he is a citizen of the kingdom of God. This citizenship involves rights and responsibilities, two things that always go together. We enjoy the rights of the kingdom, and we bear the responsibilities of the kingdom.

In 2:19 Paul covers two aspects of the church: the kingdom, indicated by the term "fellow citizens," and the family of God, indicated by the phrase "the household of God." God's house is a matter of life and enjoyment; all believers were born of God into His household to enjoy His riches. God's kingdom is a matter of rights and responsibilities; all believers who were born into the house of God have the civil rights of and their responsibility in the kingdom of God. Therefore, in 2:19 two profound matters are covered: the kingdom of God with its rights and responsibilities and the house of God with its enjoyment of the Father's life and riches. Ephesians 2:19 speaks of the saints, the household of God, and the kingdom of God. The saints are individuals, but the household of God is corporate and results in the kingdom of God. If there were no household, there could be no kingdom. First, we are saints, individuals. Then, corporately, we are the house of God resulting in the kingdom of God. (pp. 2235-2236)

The Body of Christ

Ephesians 1:22 and 23 reveal that the church is the Body of Christ. "He subjected all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all." The church is not an organization but an organic Body constituted of all the believers, who have been regenerated and have God's life, for the expression of the Head. The Body is the fullness of the Head, and the fullness is the expression of the Head. Christ, as the One who fills all in all, needs the Body to be His fullness. This Body is His church to be His expression. The church is the Body of Christ, and Christ is the Head of the church (Col. 1:18). Hence, the church and Christ are one Body, the mysterious, universal great man, having the same life and nature. Christ is the life and content of the Body, and the Body is the organism and expression of Christ. As the Body, the church receives everything from Christ; everything of Christ, therefore, is expressed through the church. The two, Christ and the church, are mingled and joined as one, with Christ being the inward content and the church, the outward expression. (pp. 2245-2246)

The Counterpart of Christ

In this exhortation in Ephesians 5:22-23, Paul presents the church as the counterpart of Christ. This reveals that the church is actually a part of Christ, for the church comes out of Christ and is unto Christ, just as Even came out of Adam and was unto Adam (Gen. 2:21-23). …The church as the counterpart of Christ implies satisfaction and rest in love. Every husband needs satisfaction and rest, which are found in love. The brothers who are husbands can testify that our satisfaction and rest can only be in our wives. If we say that we are the church, then we must ask if Christ has His rest among us. This is a serious matter. A group of Christians should not be so quick to claim that they are the church. To be the church is to render to Christ the adequate satisfaction and rest in love. Christ needs such a counterpart. The church is not merely a gathering of God's called ones. The church, as Christ's counterpart, is a satisfaction and rest to Christ in love.

In Colossians 2:2 Paul speaks of the mystery of God, which is Christ, and in Ephesians 3:4, of the mystery of Christ, which is the church. In Ephesians 5:32 Paul says, "This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church." The fact that Christ and the church are one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), as typified by the husband and wife being one flesh, is the great mystery. It surely is a great mystery that the church as Christ's counterpart comes out of Christ, has the same life and nature as Christ, and is one with Christ. (pp. 2275-2276)

The New Man

The book of Ephesians reveals that the church is the Body of Christ (1:22-23), the kingdom of God, the household of God (2:19), and the temple, the dwelling place of God (2:21-22). In 2:15 and 4:24 we see that the church is the new man. Ephesians 2:15 says, "Having abolished in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, making peace." Ephesians 4:24 says, "And have put on the new man, which according to God was created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." Furthermore, Colossians 3:10 says, "And having put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." The Greek word for church, ekklesia, means those called out for a gathering; hence, an assembly. This is the initial aspect of the church. From this aspect we need to go on to the aspects of the house of God and the kingdom of God. These are higher than the initial aspect but not as high as the aspect of the church as the Body of Christ. Yet the new man is still higher than the Body of Christ. Thus, the church is not just an assembly of believers, a kingdom of heavenly citizens, a household of God's children, nor even a Body for Christ. In an even higher aspect, the church is the new man to accomplish God's eternal purpose. The emphasis on the church being the Body of Christ is on life, whereas the emphasis on the church being the new man is on the person. As the Body of Christ, the church needs Christ as its life. As the new man, the church needs Christ as its person. The body without life is not a

body but a corpse. However, when the body makes a move, it is decided not by life but be the person. Hence, in the new man we need to take Christ as our person. The new man as a corporate person should live a life as Jesus lived on earth, that is, a life of truth, expressing God and causing God to be realized as reality by man. (pp. 2301-2302)

The Golden Lampstands

One of the crucial symbols in the Bible is that of the lampstands. Revelation 1:12 says, "I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and having turned I saw seven golden lampstands." Revelation 1:20b explains that "the seven lampstands are seven churches." The church, therefore, is signified by a golden lampstand.

In the Bible the lampstand is always related to God's building. The first time it was mentioned was in Exodus 25:31-40 when the tabernacle was built. The second instance was in the building of the temple in 1 Kings 7:49. The third instance had very much to do with the rebuilding of God's temple in Zechariah 4:2-10. In Revelation 1 the lampstand is related to the building of the churches. In Exodus 25 the emphasis is on Christ being the lampstand as the divine light, shining as the seven lamps with the Spirit (the oil). In Zechariah 4 the emphasis is on the Spirit (v. 6) shining as the seven lamps which are the eyes of Jehovah (vv. 2, 10). The seven eyes of Jehovah are the seven Spirits of God (Rev. 5:6) for God's intensified move. This indicates that the lampstand in Zechariah is the reality of the lampstand in Exodus, and the lampstands in Revelation are the reproduction of the lampstand in Zechariah. Christ is realized as the Spirit, and the Spirit is expressed as the churches. The shining Spirit is the reality of the shining Christ, and the shining churches are the reproduction and expression of the shining Spirit to accomplish God's eternal purpose that the New Jerusalem as the shining city may be consummated.

The revelation concerning the golden lampstand is found in Exodus, Zechariah, and Revelation. In Exodus the lampstand signifies Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God. In Zechariah the lampstand signifies the

nation of Israel as God's testimony. In Revelation the lampstands signify the church as God's living embodiment for the testimony of Jesus. Hence, the lampstand is a symbol of Christ, the nation of Israel, and the church. Furthermore, as we shall see, the lampstand signifies the embodiment of the Triune God. With Christ, with Israel, and with the church the golden lampstand is a portrayal of the embodiment of the Triune God. (pp. 2327-2328)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, prove that the church is the mystery of God's eternal economy.

2. What are the statuses of the church?

3. According to the Bible, prove that the church is the new man.

4. Describe briefly the development of the revelation of the golden lampstand in the Bible.

LESSON SEVENTEEN

THE PRACTICAL EXPRESSION OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading:

Rev. 1:4a John to the seven churches which are in Asia.

Rev. 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Eph. 4:4-6 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Hymn: 824

OUTLINE

I. The Church of God, as the universal Body of Christ, the universal house of God, and the kingdom of God—Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Matt. 16:18-19:

Eph. 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

1 Tim. 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

1 Tim. 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Matt. 16:19 I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in the heavens.

A. Is expressed practically as many local churches—Rev. 1:4a, 11.

Rev. 1:4a John to the seven churches which are in Asia…

Rev. 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

B. And all the local churches, being the Body of Christ separated by localities for their existence, express the same one Body, not respectively but corporately.

II. The ground of the church:

A. The ground of the church denotes the site on which the foundation of the church (Christ—1 Cor. 3:11) is laid, which keeps, in practicality, the genuine oneness of the church both locally and universally, without any division or confusion.

1 Cor. 3:11 For another foundation no one is able to lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

B. According to the divine revelation of the New Testament, the ground of the church is constituted of three crucial elements:

1. The first element is the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ, that is, the oneness of the one Spirit as the unique essence of the Body, with the one Lord as the unique element of the Body, and with the one Father as the unique source of the Body—Eph. 4:4-6.

Eph. 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

Eph. 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;

Eph. 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

2. The second element is the unique ground of locality of a local church, that is, the very locality—a city, a town, or a village—as the boundary within which a local church is established and exists, with each one locality having only one church in order to preserve the oneness and prevent division—Deut. 12:5-18:

Deut. 12:5 But to the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, to His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go.

Deut. 12:6 And there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices and your tithes and the heave offering of your hand and your vows and your freewill offerings and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock;

Deut. 12:7 And there you shall eat before Jehovah your God, and you and your households shall rejoice in all your undertakings, in which Jehovah your God has blessed you.

Deut. 12:8 You shall not do according to all that we do here today, each man doing all that is right in his own eyes;

Deut. 12:9 For until now you have not come to the rest and to the inheritance that Jehovah your God is giving you.

Deut. 12:10 But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance, and when He gives you rest from all your enemies surrounding you so that you dwell securely;

Deut. 12:11 Then to the place where Jehovah your God will choose to cause His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I am commanding you, your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the heave offering of your hand and all your choice vows which you vow to Jehovah.

Deut. 12:12 And you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God, you and your sons and daughters, and your male servants and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no portion nor inheritance with you.

Deut. 12:13 Be careful that you do not offer up your burnt offerings in every place that you see;

Deut. 12:14 But in the place which Jehovah will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer up your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you.

Deut. 12:15 Yet you may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates, in all that your soul desires, according to the blessing of Jehovah your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat it, as the gazelle and the deer.

Deut. 12:16 However, you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out upon the earth like water.

Deut. 12:17 You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or of your new wine or of your fresh oil, nor the firstborn of your herd or of your flock, or any of your vows which you vow or of your freewill offerings or of the heave offering of your hand;

Deut. 12:17 But you shall eat them before Jehovah your God in the place which Jehovah your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male servant and female servant, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God in all your undertakings.

a. **Hence, we can see the Church in Jerusalem, the Church in Antioch,**

the Church in Cenchrea, the Church in Corinth and the seven churches in Asia in seven respective cities—Acts 8:1, 13:1; Rom. 16:1, 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:4a, 11.

Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Rom. 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea.

1 Cor. 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours.

Rev. 1:4a John to the seven churches which are in Asia.

Rev. 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

b. The church must not be divided by different persons, doctrines, and practices as different grounds into sects and denominations—1Cor. 1:10-13.

1 Cor. 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

1 Cor. 1:11 For it has been made clear to me concerning you, my brothers, by those of the household of Chloe, that there are strifes among you.

1 Cor. 1:12 Now I mean this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.

1 Cor. 1:13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?

3. The third element is the reality of the Spirit of oneness by whom the oneness of Body of Christ becomes real and living and through whom the ground of locality is applied in life and not in legality—Eph. 4:3-6.

Eph. 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:

Eph. 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of

your calling;

Eph. 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;

Eph. 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

C. The church ground is therefore a spiritual fact and practical necessity, being the base of the genuine and proper fellowship of all the believers, the unique fellowship of the Body of Christ locally and universally—Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life

1 John 1:2 (And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us);

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

III. The practice of the church:

A. The church of God is the called-out assembly composed of all His children, appearing in many localities on the earth as the local churches.

B. All the local churches, composed with the believers to be the Body of Christ, are the golden lampstands, which are identical in nature, shape, and function to be the one expression of Christ—Rev. 1:11-12:

Rev. 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

Rev. 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands.

1. Although the local churches are autonomous to a certain extent in business affairs, their testimony for Christ and fellowship of the Spirit should be not only local but also universal.

2. Hence, the local churches in certain districts should be clustered as much as possible in a blending way for the spiritual benefits in the mutual building up of the Body of Christ, as the Lord Jesus

clustered the seven neighboring churches in Asia—Rev. 1-3.

C. A local church is administered by a group of elders appointed by the gifted persons who have established the church and is administered to by all the gifted saints for its building up as a living testimony of Christ—Acts 14:14a, 23, 13:1.

Acts 14:14a But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul.

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church and had prayed with fastings, they committed them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

IV. The fellowship of the Body of Christ being:

A. The fellowship of the apostles—the divine fellowship between all the believers and the Triune God—Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

B. The fellowship for the Lord's unique recovery.

C. The fellowship among the local churches:

1. The local churches being many in different localities—Rev. 1:11.

Rev. 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

2. The local churches being locally kept away from one another, but not being divided universally in essence.

3. The local churches needing to fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the whole earth.

4. Every local church needing to receive all kinds of genuine believers in Christ—Rom. 14:1-6, 15:1-7.

Rom. 14:1 Now him who is weak in faith receive, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his considerations.

Rom. 14:2 One believes that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats

vegetables.

Rom. 14:3 He who eats, let him not despise him who does not eat; and he who does not eat, let him not judge him who eats, for God has received him.

Rom. 14:4 Who are you who judge another's household servant? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Rom. 14:5 One judges one day above another; another judges every day alike. Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Rom. 14:6 He who regards that day, regards it to the Lord; and he who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who does not eat, does not eat to the Lord, and he gives thanks to God.

Rom. 15:1 But we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those who are weak and not to please ourselves.

Rom. 15:2 Let each of us please his neighbor with a view to what is good for building up.

Rom. 15:3 For Christ also did not please Himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell upon Me."

Rom. 15:4 For the things that were written previously were written for our instruction, in order that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Rom. 15:5 Now the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind toward one another according to Christ Jesus,

Rom. 15:6 That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. 15:7 Therefore receive one another, as Christ also received you to the glory of God.

5. A believer to be kept away from the fellowship of a local church because of only three things:

a. Being divisive—Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10.

Rom. 16:17 Now I exhort you, brothers, to mark those who make divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them.

Titus 3:10 A factious man, after a first and second admonition, refuse.

b. Being heretical—2 John 7-11.

2 John 7 For many deceivers went out into the world, those who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

2 John 8 Look to yourselves that you do not lose the things which we wrought, but that you may receive a full reward.

2 John 9 Everyone who goes beyond and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

2 John 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not say to him, Rejoice!

2 John 11 For he who says to him, Rejoice, shares in his evil works.

c. Committing gross sins and living in them—1 Cor. 5:9-13.

1 Cor. 5:9 I wrote to you in my letter not to mingle with fornicators,

1 Cor. 5:10 But not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous and rapacious, or idolaters, since then you would have to go out of the world.

1 Cor. 5:11 But now I have written to you not to mingle with anyone who is called a brother, if he is a fornicator or a covetous man or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or a rapacious man, with such a one not even to eat.

1 Cor. 5:12 For what have I to do with judging those who are outside the church? Do you not judge those who are within the church?

1 Cor. 5:13 But those who are outside, God will judge. Remove the evil man from among yourselves.

REFERENCE

A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery—A Supplementary Word; 1993 Blending Conference Messages Concerning the Lord's Recovery and Our Present Need, Chs. 1-2.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE CHURCH OF GOD, AS THE UNIVERSAL BODY OF CHRIST, THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF GOD, AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

According to the revelation and pattern of the New Testament, the church is the gathering of the believers in Christ who have been called out from the world by God. Such a gathering is considered, on the one hand, the house of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15) for Him to dwell in and to carry out His will according to His desire and for His pleasure, and, on the other hand,

the organic Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23) for Him to have a counterpart in the organic union with Him for His expression. This church is the new man as God's new creation (Col. 3:10; Gal. 6:15). Such a church, as both the house of God and the Body of Christ, is universally one to appear and expressed on the earth in many localities as many local churches. The fellowship in life of this church is uniquely one, both universally and locally. (1993 Blending Conference Messages Concerning the Lord's Recovery and Our Present Need, pp. 19-20)

The local churches are the many expressions in many localities of the one Body of Christ. The local churches, being the existence of the Body of Christ for its function, are the many expressions of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ may exist in the heavens, but to express itself, it must become the local churches.

A local church is one that exists in a locality as a city, the jurisdiction of the church being within the boundary of the city….All the local churches are located, respectively, in different cities. To locate a church in a city is practical and convenient for its administration and its function. The jurisdiction of a local church for its administration is within the boundary of the city in which it exists; but its work and testimony should not be limited or restricted by any boundary. For its administration, the jurisdiction of a local church is local; but the testimony of a local church through its work is both local and universal. (A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery, pp. 30-31)

THE GROUND OF THE CHURCH

The ground of the church is the oneness of the universal Body of Christ expressed on the ground of each locality of the local churches in which they are located respectively. The ground is different from the foundation. The ground denotes the site on which the foundation is laid and on which the building is built. According to the divine revelation of the New Testament, the church ground is constituted of three crucial elements—the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ, the unique ground of locality of a

local church, and the reality of the Spirit of oneness.

The First Element of the Constitution of the Church Ground—The Unique Oneness of the Universal Body of Christ

This oneness is called the oneness of the Spirit. Ephesians 4:3 says, "Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit." We need to be diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit." This oneness is what the Lord prayed for in John 17. It is a oneness of the mingling of the processed Triune God with all the believers in Christ. The oneness of the Triune God is in the name of the Father (John 17:6, 11), denoting the Father's person in which is the Father's life. In John 17:2 the Lord said He gave the eternal life to all the believers. The Father is the source not only of life but also of this oneness. The oneness of the believers originates from the Father Himself. Man is not the source of this oneness. The Father is the source.

This oneness in the Triune God is also through the sanctification of the holy word (John 17:14-21). In John 17:17 the Lord prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." The Father's word brings the reality of the Father to us to separate us, to sanctify us, from the world to God that we might be one in the Triune God. This oneness is ultimately in the divine glory for the expression of the Triune God (vv. 22-23). Such a oneness of the Triune God in the Father's name with the life of the Father through the sanctifying word and in the divine glory has been imparted into the spirit of all the believers in Christ in their regeneration by the Spirit of life. This oneness is called the oneness of the Spirit. This oneness has become the basic element of the ground of the church.

The Second Element of the Constitution of the Church Ground—The Unique Ground of Locality

The New Testament presents a clear picture that all the local churches as the expression of the universal church, the Body of Christ, are located in respective cities. Hence, we see the church in Jerusalem in Acts 8:1, the

church in Antioch in Acts 13:1, and the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 1:2. Revelation 1:11 shows us the seven churches in Asia in seven respective cities. The city is the ground on which the church is built.

Actually, the many churches are simply the one universal church appearing in many cities. We may use the illustration of the moon. There is one moon but it appears in different localities. When we are in San Diego, it is the moon in San Diego, and when we are in Taipei, it is the moon in Taipei. It is the same moon appearing in many localities. It is the same with the church. There is one church appearing in many localities.

The unique ground of locality preserves the church from being divided. Christians today are divided because of different grounds other than this unique ground of locality, the genuine ground of oneness. In one city there should be only one church. The ground of locality protects and insures that a church in a particular locality will always be preserved in oneness. This is the second element of the ground of the church.

The Third Element of the Constitution of the Church Ground Being the reality of the Spirit of Oneness

Expressing the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ on the unique ground of locality of a local church. The Spirit is the living reality of the Divine Trinity (1 John 5:6; John 16:13). It is by this Spirit that the oneness of the Body of Christ becomes real and living. It is also through this Spirit that the ground of the locality is applied in life and not in legality. And it is by this Spirit that the genuine ground of the church is linked with the Triune God (Eph. 4:3-6). These three elements—the oneness of the Spirit, the ground of locality, and the reality of the Spirit—keep the genuine oneness of the church. (1993 Blending Conference Messages Concerning the Lord's Recovery and Our Present Need, pp. 35-37)

The Base Of The Genuine And Proper Fellowship Of All The Believers

…Ground of the church …is the base of the genuine and proper fellowship of all the believers, which is called "the fellowship of the apostles" in the divine revelation (Acts 2:42), a fellowship that is with the Triune God and with all the members of Christ (1 John 1:1-3). This is the unique fellowship of the Body of Christ locally and universally. Because of the many divisive grounds of today's Christianity, the fellowship among the members of Christ also is divided into many divisive fellowships. The way to be saved out of all these divisive fellowships is to take and keep the unique, genuine, and proper ground of the church. This is not a matter of doctrine and regulation; it is a spiritual fact and a practical necessity. (A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery, pp. 29-30)

THE PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH

All the Local Churches Being the One Body of Christ Separated by the Localities of Their Existence, but Still Expressing the Same One Body, Not Respectively but Corporately

It is a wonderful thing to be saved, to have the divine life. When we received the divine life, that was marvelous. But the divine life in us brought us to the local church. It brought us to meet with the Christians in our locality to stand there as a testimony for God in that locality. But still, there is more than just the local churches. The local churches individually do not express the Body of Christ. But when the local churches come together to be coordinated and knit together, there is the expression of the Body; there is the expression of the one new man on the earth. We are not merely for our locality. We are not individual Christians, and we are not even individual churches; we are the Body of Christ. We are the one new man.

We need to see that all the local churches are the one Body of Christ separated by the localities of their existence but still expressing the same one Body, not respectively but corporately. All the local churches are the

one Body of Christ, and they are separated from one another only by the localities in which they exist. Otherwise, there is no separation in the Body of Christ. In our human body there is no separation of our hand from our foot, except that they are located in different places in the body. Likewise, the local churches are separated from one another only because they exist in different geographical locations. However, all the churches have the same life, the same nature, the same essence, the same element, the same source, and the same Triune God. Just as the Triune God cannot be divided, so the local churches as the Body of Christ cannot be divided.

The local churches are separated by the localities of their existence, but they express the same one Body; and they do this not respectively but corporately. Collectively, corporately, the churches express the Body of Christ. In each locality there is some expression of the Body, but each local church, respectively, is still only a part of the Body. God desires to have the whole Body expressed. For this we need to come together to be blended together, to be knit together, and to be coordinated so that God can have His unique expression. When God has His expression, both He and we are satisfied.

The Local Churches Being Autonomous in Business Affairs but Not in the Testimony for Christ and in the Fellowship of the Spirit

The local churches are autonomous in business affairs, but not in the testimony for Christ and in the fellowship of the Spirit. The testimony for Christ and the fellowship of the Spirit should be not only local but also universal. In such matters all the local churches are identical in nature and in function, as illustrated by the seven golden lampstands.

The local churches are autonomous in business affairs. However, the local churches are not for business affairs; business affairs are necessary so that the local churches can be the testimony of Christ. Concerning business affairs, it is obvious that each local church has its own needs and its own situation. …The different situation among the churches may affect the way

they conduct their business affairs. In many practical matters decisions can be made at a local level. Thus, each church can be considered autonomous in business affairs.

However, the fact that the local churches are autonomous in business affairs does not give them the license to become independent in their testimony or in their fellowship. The local churches are autonomous in business affairs, but not in the testimony for Christ and not in the fellowship of the Spirit. If a local church stresses its autonomy in order to isolate itself from the other churches and to have its own particular testimony and fellowship, this is altogether wrong. We need to be clear that autonomy does not apply to the church's testimony or to the church's fellowship. In these matters the churches are identical. The churches may differ in business affairs, but this does not mean that their testimony and fellowship are different. The testimony and the fellowship of all the local churches are one, for all the churches are in one Body.

The churches' testimony for Christ and the fellowship of the Spirit should not only be local but also universal. In such matters all the local churches are identical in nature and in function, as illustrated by the seven golden lampstands. In revelation 1, when John turned to see the voice that spoke with him, he saw seven golden lampstands (v. 12). This shows that regardless of its particular condition, as developed in chapters two and three of Revelation, and regardless of the diversity in the churches' negative situations, each local church was represented before the Lord as a golden lampstand. All the lampstands were golden, signifying that in nature all the churches are divine. In reading revelation 2 and 3 we can see many things related to the churches that were not divine. Nevertheless, all the churches stood before the Lord as golden lampstands, meaning that in His eyes, in His view, each local church is divine in nature. This is a wonderful fact. The church in each locality is divine in nature and is represented by a golden lampstand.

The local churches are not only identical in nature but also identical in function. The function of a golden lampstand is to stand and to shine with

light, to shine by the burning oil. This shining is the expression of Christ. The function of every local church is to stand and to shine as an expression of Christ in this dark age. Each local church has the same identical nature and the same identical function.

The Neighboring Local Churches Being Clustered as Much as Possible in the Blending Way

The neighboring local churches should be clustered as much as possible in the blending way for the spiritual benefits in the mutual building up of the Body of Christ, as the Lord Jesus clustered the seven neighboring churches in Asia. (1993 Blending Conference Messages Concerning the Lord's Recovery and Our Present Need, pp. 42-46)

The clustering of the churches for blending does not mean that we practice the federation of the churches by uniting the churches, like the federation of the fifty states of the United States. We do not practice federation, but we do practice the local churches as the one Body of Christ. In this practice the clustering and moving together of the neighboring churches should be as much as possible without the abolishing of the local administration in business affairs. The local churches …in Southern California …are close to one another geographically; that is, they are in the same neighborhood with one another. Recently, the churches in Southern California have begun to practice to be blended together by clustering on the Lord's Day. The result has been that in this blending the churches are strengthened and the impact is brought in.

In the book of Revelation the Lord Jesus clustered and blended the seven churches, and yet He put all the seven letters together as the one total Epistle and sent it to all seven churches that they might all receive the same fellowship (Rev. 1:4, 11; 2:1—3:22). In the eyes of the Lord all the seven local churches were just one church because He has only one Body. Furthermore, the apostle Paul also blended the two churches in Laodicea and Colossae together. He wrote a letter to the church in Laodicea and asked the church in Laodicea to let Colossae read it. He also wrote a letter

to the church in Colossae and asked Colossae to let Laodicea read it (Col. 4:16). (pp. 47-48)

A Local Church Needing to Be under the Leadership of the Elders and Also Needing to Be Ministered To by All the Gifted Saints for the Perfecting of the Saints

In order for the local churches to go on, they need the leadership of the elders. The New Testament reveals that the elders are not voted in by their congregations, but they are appointed by the apostles in every city, that is, in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), according to their maturity in life.

In addition to the leadership of the elders, the local churches also need to be ministered to by all the gifted members in the Body for the perfecting of the saints that they may participate in the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12, 16). …The Body of Christ is built up …by the functioning of all the perfected members of the Body. In the church of God, the Body of Christ, all the members should be living, vital, and functioning members. After being perfected, all the saints become the building members to build up the Body of Christ. (pp. 51-52)

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST BEING:

The Fellowship of the Apostles

The fellowship of the Body of Christ is the fellowship of the apostles—the divine fellowship between all the believers and the Triune God. The term the fellowship of the apostles is used in Acts 2:42: “And they were continuing steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles.” Then, 1 John 1:3 tells us that the fellowship of the apostles is not merely with us, the believers, but also with the Father and the Son. Here John did not mention the Spirit directly, because he was speaking in the Spirit. The Spirit was there already. The fellowship of the apostles is the fellowship of the Body of Christ, the divine fellowship between all the believers and the Triune God.

The fellowship of the apostles is based upon the apostles' teaching. Fellowship always comes after reaching. If there is no teaching, there is no element or realm of the fellowship. Actually, the teaching is the element and the realm of the fellowship. By the Lord's mercy, today in the Lord's recovery we are under the apostles' teaching and in the apostles' fellowship. The fellowship of the recovery which we are in is the recovered fellowship of the apostles. This fellowship was lost, but it has been recovered. Today we are in the fellowship of the apostles, which is the fellowship of the Lord's recovery. If you are a Baptist, you are in the fellowship of the Baptists. But the fellowship of the Baptists is narrower than the fellowship of the apostles, so they cannot claim that their fellowship is the fellowship of the apostles. We need to see and have the boldness to say that we are in the fellowship of the recovery which is the recovered apostles' fellowship.

Being the fellowship for the Lord's unique recovery

We always need to remember that we are in the Lord's recovery and that His recovery is unique. There is not another recovery, just as there is not another Body of Christ or another New Testament. The fellowship of the apostles is the fellowship for this unique recovery of the Lord. When we see something going on in the recovery which is not so good, we need to have this kind of fellowship and a proper attitude. When a man marries someone, he is bound to her for as long as he lives. If he is unhappy with her, he cannot divorce her. He should try the best to help his wife by fellowshipping to improve in a nice and living way. He should not charge her to improve but help her to improve. This is the right way. When we see something wrong in the recovery or in any of the local churches, we should try the best to help the situation by fellowshipping so that it can be improved and corrected. If there is anything wrong, we can and should fellowship and pray together and seek the Lord's leading to improve the situation for the benefit of all the saints. This will be a real help to the Lord's recovery. (A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery, pp. 38-39)

The Fellowship Among The Local Churches

The Local Churches Being Many in Different Localities

The local churches are many in different localities (Rev. 1:11). The Body of Christ as the church, the unique universal church, is expressed through the local churches. It is impossible for the Body of Christ to be expressed without the local churches. The local churches, which are the expressions of the unique Body of Christ, are scattered on this earth in the localities where the local churches exist to express the Body of Christ.

The Local Churches Being Locally Kept Away from One Another, but Not Being Divided Universally

The local churches are locally kept away from one another by their being in different localities. I do not say that they are separated from one another; the word separated may carry the connotation of division. I have used the term kept away because to be kept away is not to be divided. The churches are kept away from one another only by their localities, not by anything else. However, they are not divided universally.

The Local Churches Needing to Fellowship with All the Genuine Local Churches on the Whole Earth

The local churches should fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the whole earth to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ. Any local church that does not keep this universal fellowship of the Body of Christ is divisive and becomes a local sect. Some so-called local churches are not genuine and have become divisions; we do not need to fellowship with such "churches." But we should have fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the whole earth to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ. If not, we are no longer a church but a sect. A church is one that remains in the Body, a sect is a group of believers who divide themselves from the Body. When my arm remains in the body, it is a part of

my living body. If it is cut off and separated from the body, it becomes a dead thing.

Every Local Church Needing to Receive All Kinds of Genuine Believers in Christ

Every local church should receive all kinds of genuine believers in Christ (Rom. 14:1-6; 15:1-7). We have no right to give up any believer, unless he is divisive. …If a believer prefers to keep the Sabbath whereas we take the Lord's Day, or if he eats only vegetables whereas we eat every kind of food, we still must receive him. We must receive him because God has received him (Rom. 14:3) and because Christ has received him (Rom. 15:7). We must receive every believer in Christ according to Christ (Rom. 15:5).

A Believer to Be Kept Away from the Fellowship of a Local Church Because of Only Three Things

A believer can be kept away from the fellowship of a local church, that is, the fellowship of the Body of Christ, because of only three things.

The first thing is being divisive, making divisions and causes of falling contrary to the apostles' teaching (Rom. 16:17). According to Paul's word in Romans 16:17 and in Titus 3:10, after the first and second admonitions, we must reject such persons and turn away from them. To do this is to quarantine such persons. To quarantine a person does not mean that we hate that person. If one member in a family became ill with a contagious disease, the rest of the family would need to quarantine him for the safety of the whole family. Otherwise, the entire family would be affected.

The second thing for which a believer can be kept away from the fellowship of the church is being heretical, denying that Christ came in the flesh (2 John 7-11). This implies the denying of Christ's redemptive work, which was accomplished by Christ in His flesh (Rom. 8:3; Col. 1:22). The apostle John said that if such a one comes to us, we should not receive him into our home, and we should not even greet him. Then John said that if we greet him, saying to him, "Rejoice," we will share in his sin.

The third thing for which a believer can be kept away from the fellowship of a local church is the committing of gross sins and living in these sins, not being willing to repent of them and forsake them (1 Cor. 5:9-13). A person who commits gross sins in this way should be removed from the fellowship of the church. But once such a one would repent and forsake his sins, the church should forgive him and receive him into the fellowship of the church, that we may not be taken advantage of by Satan (2 Cor. 3:5-11). (pp. 43-47)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly the definition of the church of God.

2. Describe briefly the ground of the church and the three crucial elements constituting the ground of the church.

3. Describe briefly the practice of the church.

4. Describe briefly what means by the fellowship of the Body of Christ.

LESSON EIGHTEEN

THE SEVEN STAGES OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading:

Rev. 1:4a John to the seven churches which are in Asia…

Rev. 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.

Rev. 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

Hymn: 1274

OUTLINE

I. The seven churches in Asia, being actual local churches, signify prophetically the seven stages which the church has gone through and will go through until the Lord's coming back—Rev. 2-3.

II. The Church in Ephesus depicts the end of the stage of the initial church during the last part of the first century—Rev. 2:1-7.

Rev. 2:1 To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write: These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

Rev. 2:2 I know your works and your labor and your endurance and that you cannot bear evil men; and you have tried those who call themselves apostles and are not, and have found them to be false;

Rev. 2:3 And you have endurance and have borne all things because of My name and have not grown weary.

Rev. 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.

Rev. 2:5 Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.

Rev. 2:6 But this you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Rev. 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To

him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

III. The Church in Smyrna prefigures the suffering church under the persecution of the Roman Empire from the latter part of the first century to the early part of the fourth century—Rev. 2:8-11.

Rev. 2:8 And to the messenger of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the First and the Last, who became dead and lived again:

Rev. 2:9 I know your tribulation and poverty (but you are rich) and the slander from those who call themselves Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Rev. 2:10 Do not fear the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison that you may be tried, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Rev. 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death.

IV. The Church in Pergamos pre-symbolizes the worldly church, the church married the world, from the day Constantine accepted Christianity in the early part of the fourth century to the time the papal system was established in the latter part of the sixth century—Rev. 2:12-17.

Rev. 2:12 And to the messenger of the church in Pergamos write: These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

Rev. 2:13 I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name and have not denied My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Rev. 2:14 But I have a few things against you, that you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices and to commit fornication.

Rev. 2:15 In the same way you also have some who hold in like manner the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Rev. 2:16 Repent therefore; but if not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war with them with the sword of My mouth.

Rev. 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives it.

V. The Church in Thyatira pre-symbolizes the apostate church, from the ordination of the papal system in the latter part of the sixth century to the end of the church age—Rev. 2:18-29.

Rev. 2:18 And to the messenger of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, He who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like shining bronze:

Rev. 2:19 I know your works and love and faith and service and your endurance and that your last works are more than the first.

Rev. 2:20 But I have something against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and leads My slaves astray to commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices.

Rev. 2:21 And I gave her time that she might repent, and she is not willing to repent of her fornication.

Rev. 2:22 Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her, into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works;

Rev. 2:23 And her children I will kill with death; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the inward parts and the hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Rev. 2:24 But I say to you—the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they say—I put no other burden upon you;

Rev. 2:25 Nevertheless what you have hold fast until I come.

Rev. 2:26 And he who overcomes and he who keeps My works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations;

Rev. 2:27 And he will shepherd them with an iron rod, as vessels of pottery are broken in pieces, as I also have received from My Father;

Rev. 2:28 And to him I will give the morning star.

Rev. 2:29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

VI. The Church in Sardis prefigures the Protestant Church, from the reformation in the early part of the sixteenth century to Christ's coming back—Rev. 3:1-6.

Rev. 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.

Rev. 3:2 Become watchful and establish the things which remain, which were about to die; for I have found none of your works completed before My God.

Rev. 3:3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and keep it and repent. If therefore you will not watch, I will come as a thief, and you

shall by no means know at what hour I will come upon you.

Rev. 3:4 But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.

Rev. 3:5 He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Rev. 3:6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

VII. The Church in Philadelphia prefigures the church of brotherly love, the recovery of the proper church life, from the early part of the nineteenth century to the second appearing of the Lord—Rev. 3:7-13.

Rev. 3:7 And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens:

Rev. 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

Rev. 3:9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, those who call themselves Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will cause them to come and fall prostrate before your feet and to know that I have loved you.

Rev. 3:10 Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.

Rev. 3:11 I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown.

Rev. 3:12 He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Rev. 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

VIII. The Church in Laodicea foreshadows the degraded church life of the brothers from the latter part of the nineteenth century to the Lord's return—Rev. 3:14-22.

Rev. 3:14 And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God:

Rev. 3:15 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

Rev. 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.

Rev. 3:17 Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

Rev. 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.

Rev. 3:19 As many as I love I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent.

Rev. 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.

Rev. 3:21 He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.

Rev. 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

IX. All the last four kinds of churches will remain until the Lord's coming back.

REFERENCE

The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 7, Chs. 235-238.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA, BEING ACTUAL LOCAL CHURCHES, SIGNIFY PROPHETICALLY THE SEVEN STAGES WHICH THE CHURCH HAS GONE THROUGH AND WILL GO THROUGH UNTIL THE LORD'S COMING BACK

Revelation is a book of prophecy (Rev. 1:3; 22:7), for the revelation it contains is in the nature of prophecy. Most of the visions refer to things to come. Even the seven epistles to the seven churches in chapters two and three, in the sense of signs, are prophecies regarding the church on earth

until the Lord's coming back.

The seven epistles in chapters two and three of Revelation are the record of the actual situation existing in the seven churches of Asia (1:4) at the time these epistles were written. However, since this book is a book of signs with a prophetic nature, the situations of the seven churches are also signs, signifying prophetically the progress of the church in seven stages. The first epistle, to the church in Ephesus, affords a picture of the church at the end of first stage, during the last part of the first century. The second epistle, to the church in Smyrna, prefigures the suffering church under the persecution of the Roman Empire, from the last part of the first century to the early part of the fourth century, when Constantine the Great brought the church into imperial favor. The third epistle, to the church in Pergamos, pre-symbolizes the worldly church, the church married to the world, from the time Constantine accepted Christianity to the time the papal system was established in the latter part of the sixth century. The epistle to the church in Thyatira depicts prophetically the apostate church, from the ordination of the papal system in the latter part of the sixth century to the end of this age, when Christ comes back. The fifth epistle, to the church in Sardis, prefigures the Protestant church, from the Reformation in the early part of the sixteenth century to Christ's coming back. The sixth epistle, to the church in Philadelphia, predicts the church of brotherly love, the recovery of the proper church life, from the early part of the nineteenth century, when the brothers were raised up in England to practice the church life outside all denominational and divisive systems, to the second appearing of the Lord. The seventh epistle, to the church in Laodicea, foreshadows the degraded church life of the brothers in the nineteenth century, from the latter part of the nineteenth century until the Lord's return.

If we study church history in the light of these seven epistles, we shall realize that these epistles present us a picture of the stages which the church has gone through and will go through until the Lord's coming back. The sequence is marvelous, with each stage corresponding respectively to

one of the seven churches. Therefore, the Lord's seven epistles to the seven churches depict the stages of the church. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 7, pp. 2497-2498)

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS— THE END OF THE STAGE OF THE INITIAL CHURCH

The church in Ephesus depicts the end of the stage of the initial church during the last part of the first century. Because there have been apostles not only at the beginning of the church but also later, it is better to speak of the initial church rather than the apostolic church. Ephesus depicts the church at the end of the initial period.

"Ephesus" in Greek means desirable. This signifies that the initial church at its end was still desirable to the Lord; the Lord still had much expectation in her. (pp. 2498-2499)

THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA— THE SUFFERING CHURCH UNDER THE PERSECUTION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

In Greek "Smyrna" means myrrh, a sweet spice which, in figure, signifies suffering. In typology, myrrh signifies the sweet suffering of Christ. Thus, the church in Smyrna was a suffering church, prefiguring the church under the persecution of the Roman Empire from the latter part of the first century to the early part of the fourth century. This persecuted church suffered in the sweetness and fragrance of Christ. In other words, this church was in the tribulation of Jesus and in the fellowship of His sufferings. The church in Smyrna suffered as Christ Himself did and thereby became a continuation of His suffering.

In Colossians 1:24 Paul tells us that he filled up "that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body, which is the church." The afflictions of Christ are of two categories: those for accomplishing redemption, which have been completed by Christ Himself, and those for producing and building the church, which need to be filled up by the

apostles and the believers. Although no one can continue Christ's redemption, His sufferings must be completed by all His followers both individually and collectively. In the church in Smyrna we see the collective continuation of the sufferings of Jesus. Because this church was a continuation of Jesus' suffering, it was truly the testimony of Jesus. (pp. 2507-2508)

THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS— THE WORLDLY CHURCH, THE CHURCH MARRIED THE WORLD

In Greek "Pergamos" means "marriage," implying union, and "fortified tower." As a sign, the church in Pergamos prefigures the church which entered into a marriage union with the world and became a high fortified tower, the equivalent of the great tree prophesied by the Lord in the parable of the mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-32). When Satan failed to destroy the church through the persecution of the Roman Empire in the first three centuries, he changed his strategy. He sought instead to corrupt her through Constantine's welcoming her as the state religion in the first part of the fourth century. Through Constantine's encouragement and political influence, multitudes of unbelieving ones were baptized into the "church," and the "church" became monstrously great. Because the church, as a chaste bride, is the spouse the Christ, her union with the world is considered spiritual fornication in the eyes of God.

According to the facts of history, during the first three centuries, the church suffered a great deal as the Roman Empire tried its best to damage her. Eventually, Satan realized that persecution did not work very well. Therefore, being the subtle one, he changed his strategy from persecuting the church to welcoming her. In the early part of the fourth century, Constantine the Great accepted Christianity and made it a state religion. From that time onward, Christianity became a kind of Roman state church. This welcoming of the church by the Roman Empire ruined her because it caused the church to become worldly. The church has been called out of

the world and has been separated from the world to God for the fulfillment of His purpose. However, by being welcomed by the Roman Empire, the church went back to the world and, in the eyes of God, even married the world. (p. 2511)

THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA—
THE APOSTATE CHURCH

The church in Thyatira is the church in apostasy. "Thyatira" in Greek means "sacrifice of perfume" or "unceasing sacrifice." As a sign, the church in Thyatira prefigures the Roman Catholic Church, which was fully formed as the apostate church by the establishment of the universal papal system in the latter part of the sixth century. This apostate church is full of sacrifices, as demonstrated in her unceasing mass. This apostate church will remain until the Lord's coming back.

In [Revelation] 2:19 the Lord says, "I know your works and love and faith and service and your endurance, and that your last works are more than the first." The apostate Catholic Church has many works and services. Her works in the last days are more than in the past.

The church in Thyatira is a continuation of the worldly church, pre-symbolized by the church in Pergamos. The church in Pergamos had the teaching of the Gentile prophet Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans, that is, the teaching of a clerical system. The Catholic Church continues these teachings, the teaching of Balaam to bring people into idol worship and fornication and the teaching of the Nicolaitans to build up the hierarchy. In the Catholic Church today there is a strong teaching concerning the building up of a religious organization with its hierarchy. (pp. 2517-2518)

THE CHURCH IN SARDIS—
THE PROTESTANT CHURCH

"Sardis" in Greek means "the remains," "the remainder," or "the restoration." As a sign, the church in Sardis prefigures the Protestant

Church from the time of the Reformation to the second coming of Christ. The Reformation was God's reaction to the apostate Roman Catholic Church, signified by the degraded church in Thyatira. The Reformation was accomplished by a minority of the believers, the remainder. Hence, it was the restoration by the remainder.

To the messenger of the church in Sardis the Lord says, "I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and you are dead" (Rev. 3:1). The reformed Protestant Church has been considered by many to be living, but the Lord says that she is dead. Hence, in her dead condition, she needs the seven living Spirits and the shining stars. In name the Protestant denominations are living and are better than the Catholic Church. Actually, the Protestant denominations are dead.

In [Revelation chapter 3] verse 2 the Lord says to "establish the things which remain, which were about to die." "The things which remain" are the things lost and restored by the Reformation, such as justification by faith and the open Bible. Although these things were restored, they "were about to die." Hence, the Protestant Church needs revivals to keep things alive.

In verse 2 the Lord also says, "I have not found your works completed before My God." Nothing begun in the Reformation has been completed by the Protestant churches. Therefore, the church in Philadelphia (3:7-13), signifying the church in recovery, is needed for the completion. In the eyes of God, there are no completed works in the so-called reformed churches. (pp. 2521-2522)

THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA— THE CHURCH OF BROTHERLY LOVE

In Greek, "Philadelphia" means brotherly love. As a sign, the church in Philadelphia prefigures the proper church life recovered by the brothers who were raised up by the Lord in England in the early part of the nineteenth century. Just as the reformed church, prefigured by the church in Sardis, was a reaction to the apostate Catholic Church, prefigured by the church in Thyatira, so the church of brotherly love is a reaction to the dead

reformed church. This reaction will continue as an anti-testimony to both apostate Catholicism and degraded Protestantism until the Lord comes back.

In 3:8b the Lord Jesus says, "You have a little power and have kept My word." One outstanding feature of the church in Philadelphia is that she kept the Lord's word. According to history, no other Christians have kept the Lord's word as strictly as those in the church in Philadelphia. The church in Philadelphia, the recovered church, does not care for tradition; she cares for the word of God.

The church in Philadelphia keeps the Lord's word with the little power she has. We should not regard the church in Philadelphia as being strong, powerful, and prevailing. Whereas we may estimate the church in Philadelphia very highly, the Lord says that she had "a little power." What pleases the Lord is not that we are strong but that we use our little power to do the best we can. The strong ones may not please the Lord as much as those who do their best with the little power they have.

In 3:8 the Lord also says that the church in Philadelphia has not denied His name. The brothers who were raised up by the Lord in England in the early part of the nineteenth century did not take any name other than the name of the Lord. The word is the Lord's expression, and the name is the Lord Himself. The apostate church has deviated from the Lord's word and has become heretical. The reformed church, though recovered to the Lord's word to some extent, has denied the Lord's name by denominating herself with many other names. The recovered church has not only returned to the Lord's word in a full way but has also abandoned all names other than that of the Lord Jesus Christ. The recovered church belongs to the Lord absolutely, having nothing to do with any denominations (any names). To deviate from the Lord's word is apostasy, and to denominate the church with any name other that the Lord's is spiritual fornication. The church as the chaste virgin betrothed to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2) should not have any name other than her Husband's. All other names are an abomination in the eyes of God. In the recovered church life we have no teachings of Balaam

(Rev. 2:14), no teachings of the Nicolaitans (2:15), no teachings of Jezebel (2:20), and no mysterious doctrines of Satan (2:24); we have only the pure word of the Lord. Likewise, the recovered church has no denominations (names) but the unique name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The deviation from the Word to heresies and the exaltation of so many names other than that of Christ are the most striking signs of degraded Christianity. The return to the pure Word from all heresies and traditions and the exaltation of the Lord's name by abandoning every other name are the most inspiring testimony in the recovered church. (pp. 2525-2527)

THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA—
THE DEGRADED CHURCH LIFE OF THE BROTHERS

In Greek "Laodicea" means the opinion, the judgment, of the people or of the laymen. The church in Laodicea as a sign prefigures the degraded recovered church. Less than a century after the Lord recovered the proper church in the early part of the nineteenth century, some of the recovered churches ("assemblies") became degrade. This degraded recovered church differs from the reformed church signified by the church in Sardis; it also differs from the proper recovered church signified by the church in Philadelphia. The degraded recovered church, signified by Laodicea, will exist until the Lord comes back.

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit you out of My mouth" (3:15-16). Once the recovered church becomes degraded, it is lukewarm—neither cold nor hot.

According to verse 16b, the Lord is about to vomit the lukewarm ones out of His mouth. Once we become lukewarm, we are not fitting for the Lord's move and shall be vomited out of His mouth. When the recovered church becomes degraded, she is in danger, unless she repents to be hot in seeking the rich experiences of the Lord, of being vomited out of the Lord's mouth. To be vomited out of the Lord's mouth is to lose the enjoyment of all that the Lord is to His church.

In verse 17 the Lord continues, "Because you say, I am rich and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." The degraded recovered church ("assembly") boasts of her riches (mainly in the knowledge of doctrines). She does not realize that she is poor in life, blind in sight, and naked in conduct. (pp. 2530-2531)

ALL THE LAST FOUR KINDS OF CHURCHES WILL REMAIN UNTIL THE LORD'S COMING BACK

The seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 not only signify prophetically the progress of the church in seven stages but also symbolize the seven kinds of churches in church history: the initial church, the suffering church, the worldly church, the apostate church, the reformed church, the recovered church, and the degraded recovered church. The initial church had its continuation in the suffering church; the suffering church turned into the worldly church; and the worldly church became the apostate church. Hence, the first four churches eventually issued in one kind of church, that is, the apostate church, the Roman Catholic Church. Then, as a reaction to the apostate church, the reformed church came into existence as another kind of church, a church not fully recovered. Following this, the recovered church was raised up as a full recovery of the church life. By the degradation of the recovered church, the degraded recovered church came into being. These four kinds of churches—Roman Catholic Church, the reformed church, the recovered church, and the degraded recovered church—will remain until the Lord comes back. Undoubtedly, only the recovered church can fulfill God's eternal purpose, and only she is what the Lord is after. (pp. 2534-3535)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly the names and the characteristics of the seven churches and the period of their existence according to the prophecy.

2. Describe briefly the positive aspects of the church in Philadelphia and her relationship with the Lord's recovery.

3. What kind of warnings should we receive from the condition of the church in Laodicea?

4. What kind of churches will remain until the Lord comes back?

LESSON NINETEEN

THE THREE ASPECTS OF THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS

Scripture Reading:

Matt. 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

Matt.13:24-26 Another parable He set before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man sowing good seed in his field. But while the men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares in the midst of the wheat and went away and when the blade sprouted and produced fruit, then the tares appeared also.

Matt. 24:45-47 Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Truly I say to you that he will set him over all his possessions.

Rom.14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. Its reality as revealed in Matthew 5—7:

A. The reality of the overcoming church life.

B. Existing within the church in the church age.

C. An exercise to the seeking believers.

II. Its appearance as revealed in Matthew 13:24-43 through the parables of the tares, the mustard seed, and the leaven:

A. The appearance of Christendom.

B. Existing along with the church in the church age.

III. Its manifestation as revealed in Matthew 24:44—25:30:

A. The manifestation of the reality of the kingdom of the heavens.

B. The kingdom of the Father, the heavenly part of the millennium.

C. A reward to the overcoming saints.

D. Existing in the millennium during the age of the millennium.

REFERENCE

The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 8, Ch. 243; New Testament Recovery Version, Matthew 5—Chart—"The Difference between the Kingdom of the Heavens and the Kingdom of God"

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

According to the Gospel of Matthew, there are three aspects of the kingdom of the heavens: the reality, the appearance, and the manifestation. The reality of the kingdom of the heavens is the inward content of the kingdom of the heavens in its heavenly and spiritual nature, as revealed in chapters five through seven. The appearance of the kingdom of the heavens is the outward condition of the kingdom of the heavens in name, as revealed in chapter thirteen. The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens is the practical coming of the kingdom of the heavens in power, as revealed in chapters twenty-four and twenty-five. Both the reality and the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens are with the church today. The reality of the kingdom of the heavens is the proper church life (Rom. 14:17), which is within the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens, known as Christendom. The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens will be the heavenly part of the coming millennial kingdom. If we have a full understanding of these three aspects of the kingdom of the heavens, we shall know the truth of the kingdom of the heavens in a very thorough way.

THE REALITY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS AS REVEALED IN MATTHEW 5—7

Matthew 5-7 reveals the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. The word

spoken by the Lord Jesus in these chapters is the revelation of the spiritual living and heavenly principles of the kingdom of the heavens.

The Reality Of The Overcoming Church Life

The reality of the kingdom of heavens is the reality of the overcoming church life. The record of Matthew 5-7 gives us a view of a certain kind of reality, the reality of the high standard of the divine life. This is the overcoming church life.

Existing Within The Church In The Church Age

The reality of the kingdom of heavens exists today within the church in the church age. However, there is not much of the reality of the kingdom of heavens in today's Christianity. We hope that among us in the church life the reality of the kingdom of heavens will increase continually.

An Exercise to the Seeking Believers

A number of verses in Matthew indicate that the reality of the kingdom of the heavens is an exercise to the seeking believers. Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." The spirit here refers not to the Spirit of God but to our human spirit, the deepest part of our being, the organ for us to contact God and realize spiritual things. To be poor in spirit is not only to be humble but also to be emptied in our spirit, in the depth of our being, not holding on to the old things but being unloaded to receive the new things, the things of the kingdom of the heavens. We need to be poor, emptied, unloaded, in this part of our being so that we may realize and possess the kingdom of the heavens. According to the Lord's word, if we are poor in spirit, the kingdom of the heavens is ours. This means that if we are poor in spirit, we are in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens now in the church age.

Anyone who is not poor in spirit but instead is proud and full in his spirit is not under the exercise of the kingdom of heavens. If we are poor in spirit, we shall say, "Lord, I know nothing. Have mercy on me. Lord, I am poor in

my spirit and I am hungry after You." If we pray in this way, being poor in spirit, we shall be under the exercise of the kingdom of heavens.

In 5:10 the Lord tells us that those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness are blessed, "for theirs is the kingdom of heavens." If we seek righteousness at a cost, the kingdom of heavens becomes ours. …This indicates that suffering for the sake of righteousness is a condition for participation in the kingdom of heavens. If we do not remain in righteousness, we are outside the kingdom. But if we stay in righteousness, we are in the kingdom because the kingdom is absolutely a matter of righteousness. As we seek righteousness, we should be prepared to confront persecution. …If we persecuted for the sake of righteousness, we are truly under the exercise of the kingdom of heavens. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 2571 2574)

THE APPEARANCE OF THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS AS REVEALED IN MATTHEW 13:24-43 THROUGH THE PARABLES OF THE TARES, THE MUSTARD SEED, AND THE LEAVEN

The Appearance of Christendom

In Matthew 13:24-43 the appearance of Christendom as the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens is revealed through the parables of the tares, the mustard seed, and the leaven.

The parable of the tares (13:24-30, 36-43) reveals the establishment of the kingdom and its false constituents. Verses 24 and 25 say, "The kingdom of the heavens was likened to a man sowing good seed in his field. But while the men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares amidst the wheat and went away." The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man (v. 37), the field is the world, the good seed are the sons of the kingdom, and the tares are the sons of the evil one (v. 38). Both the tares and the wheat grow in the field; that is, the false believers and the true ones live in the world. The kingdom of the heavens was established with the sons of the kingdom,

the wheat, but the sons of the evil one, the tares, grew up to alter the situation. Hence, a difference has arisen between the kingdom of the heavens and its outward appearance. Whereas the sons of the kingdom constitute the kingdom, the sons of the evil one have formed the outward appearance of the kingdom, which today is called Christendom.

In 13:31 and 32 we have a parable telling of the abnormal development of the outward appearance of the kingdom. "Another parable He set before them, saying, The kingdom of heavens is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which is indeed smaller than all the seeds, but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches." The church, which is the embodiment of the kingdom, should be like an herb to produce food, but it became a tree, a lodge for birds, having its nature and function changed. …This happened when Constantine the Great mixed the church with the world in the first part of the fourth century. He brought thousands of false believers into Christianity, making it Christendom, no longer the church.

In Matthew 13:33 we have a parable concerning the inward corruption of the outward appearance of the kingdom. "The kingdom of heavens is like leaven, which a women took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened." Leaven in Scripture signifies evil things (1 Cor. 5:6, 8) and evil doctrines (Matt. 16:6, 11-12). The meal here, for making the meal offering (Lev. 2:1), signifies Christ as food for God and man. Three measures is the quantity needed to make a full meal (Gen. 18:6). The church, as the practical kingdom of heavens, with Christ—the unleavened fine flour—as its contents, should be unleavened bread (1 Cor. 5:7-8). However, the Catholic Church, which was fully and officially formed in the sixth century and which is signified here by the woman, took many pagan practices, heretical doctrines, and evil matters and mixed them with the teachings concerning Christ to leaven the whole content of Christianity. …This became the inward, corrupted content of the outward appearance of the kingdom of heavens.

Existing Along With The Church In The Church Age

The outward appearance of the kingdom of heavens exists along with the church in the church age, but it does not exist within the church. As a principle, we do not allow tares in the church life, and we do not allow the big tree with its abnormal growth or the leaven with its corruption to be in the church.

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS AS REVEALED IN MATTHEW 24:44-25:30

When the Lord Jesus comes back, the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens will be realized. This is revealed in Matthew 24:44-25:30. Only the overcomers who are in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens today will have a share in the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens in the future. The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens will be a reward, a prize, given to the overcomers.

The Manifestation of the Reality of the Kingdom of the Heavens

The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens will be the manifestation of the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. This means that in the next age the reality of the kingdom will become the manifestation of the kingdom.

During the present age, the reality of the kingdom and the appearance of the kingdom progress simultaneously. However, when the Lord Jesus comes back, the reality of the kingdom will be transferred into the manifestation of the kingdom, and the appearance of the kingdom will be burned away. The Lord's angels will bind the tares into bundles and cast them into the fire (Matt. 13:40-42) because the tares have done much damage to the lord's kingdom. Therefore, at His coming back, the Lord will deal first with the appearance of the kingdom, and then He will transfer the

reality of the kingdom into the next age to become the manifestation of the kingdom.

The Kingdom Of The Father, The Heavenly Part Of The Millennium

The manifestation of the kingdom will be the kingdom of the Father, the heavenly part of the millennium. The millennium will have an earthly part and a heavenly part. The earthly part will be the kingdom of the Messiah (2 Sam. 7:13), the tabernacle of David (Acts 15:16), the kingdom of the Son of Man (Matt. 13:41; Rev. 11:15). The heavenly part of the millennium will be the kingdom of the Father (Matt. 13:43). This will be the manifestation of the kingdom of heavens as a reward to the overcomers. In the millennium the overcomers in the heavenly part of the kingdom will reign with Christ over the earthly part, which will be the restored kingdom of David, where Christ as the Son of Man, David's royal descendant, will be the King over the children of Israel.

A Reward To The Overcoming Saints

The manifestation of the kingdom of heavens will be a reward to the overcoming saints. Paul says, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18). The heavenly kingdom is the kingdom of our Father (Matt. 13:43), the kingdom of the Father (Matt. 26:29), the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph. 5:5), and the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:11), which will be a reward to the overcoming saints. The heavenly kingdom in 2 Timothy 4:18 equals the crown of righteousness in 4:8, and it is an incentive to the believers to run the heavenly course.

Existing In The Millennium During The Age Of The Millennium

The manifestation of the kingdom of heavens will exist in the millennium during the age of the millennium. Whereas the reality of the

kingdom of heavens is with the church in this age, the manifestation of the kingdom of heavens will be in the coming age. (pp. 2575-2579)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly the reality of the kingdom of the heavens.
2. Describe briefly the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens.
3. Describe briefly the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens.

LESSON TWENTY

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading:

Acts 1:11 Who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven.

Rev. 3:3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and keep it and repent. If therefore you will not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall by no means know at what hour I will come upon you.

Rev. 1:7 Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him. Yes, amen.

Hymn: #1354 (When the Lord descends from heaven—Hope of Glory Waiting and Watching

OUTLINE

I. The promise of Christ's second coming:

A. He will come in the same way as He went into heaven—Acts 1:11.

B. The Coming One will come and will not delay—Heb. 10:37.

Heb. 10:37 For in yet a very little while the Coming One will come and will not delay.

II. The definition of the second coming—the actual coming of the Lord Jesus:

A. He ascended into heaven in a cloud, and He will return on a cloud—Acts 1:9; Matt. 24:30, 26:64; Rev. 1:7.

Acts 1:9 And when He had said these things, while they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.

Matt. 24:30 And at that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Matt. 26:64 Jesus said to him, You have said rightly. Nevertheless I say to you, From

now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Rev. 1:7 Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him. Yes, amen.

B. He ascended into heaven on the Mount of Olives, and He will return on the Mount of Olives—Acts 1:11-12; Zech. 14:4.

Acts 1:11 Who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven.

Acts 1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

Zech. 14:4 And His feet will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split at its middle toward the east and toward the west into a very great valley, so that half of the mountain will remove to the north and half of it to the south.

III. Seventy weeks being apportioned out by God—Dan. 9:24-27:

Dan. 9:24 Seventy weeks are apportioned for your people and for your holy city, to close the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make propitiation for iniquity, and to bring in the righteousness of the ages, and to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint the Holy of Holies.

Dan. 9:25 Know therefore and comprehend: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the time of Messiah the Prince will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with street and trench, even in distressful times.

Dan. 9:26 And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah will be cut off and will have nothing; and the people of the prince who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end of it will be with a flood, and even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

Dan. 9:27 And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week; and in the middle of the week he will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease and will replace the sacrifice and the oblation with abominations of the desolator, even until the complete destruction that has been determined is poured out upon the desolator.

A. The first section consists of seven weeks, counting from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes. The period from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the completion of the restoration and rebuilding was a total of forty-nine years—Neh.

2:1-8.

Neh. 2:1 Then in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, while wine was being set before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence.

Neh. 2:2 And the king said to me, Why is your face sad, since you are not ill? This is nothing other than sadness of heart. Then I was greatly frightened.

Neh. 2:3 And I said to the king, May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in waste and its gates are consumed with fire?

Neh. 2:4 And the king said to me, What do you request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

Neh. 2:5 And I said to the king, If it please the king and if your servant has found favor before you, that you would send me to Judah to the city of my fathers' graves that I may rebuild it.

Neh. 2:6 And the king said to me (and the queen was sitting beside him), How long will your going be, and when will you return? So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a date.

Neh. 2:7 Then I said to the king, If it please the king, let letters be given to me for the governors beyond the River, so that they will let me pass through until I come to Judah;

Neh. 2:8 And a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the Park, which belongs to the king, so that he would give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace that belongs to the house and for the wall of the city and for the house that I will be entering. And the king gave these to me according to the good hand of my God, which was upon me.

B. The second section of the seventy weeks consists of sixty-two weeks, from the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the cutting off of the anointed One (Messiah—Christ), a total of 434 years:

1. In that very year, on the fourteenth day of the first month, the day of the Passover, the Lord Jesus was crucified.

2. At this point the seventy weeks were interrupted. A long period of time would follow before the last week would come. It is not possible to find out the length of this interval. This interval is the age of the church, which is the age of grace. It is also called the age of mysteries.

3. This age begins and ends with the two comings of Christ.

C. At the beginning of the last week, Antichrist will make a firm

covenant with Israel for seven years:

1. **In the middle of the seven years he will break the covenant, terminate Israel's sacrifices and oblations to God, and persecute those who fear God—Dan. 9:27; Rev. 12:14-17.**

Dan. 9:27 And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week; and in the middle of the week he will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease and will replace the sacrifice and the oblation with abominations of the desolator, even until the complete destruction that has been determined is poured out upon the desolator.

Rev. 12:14 And to the woman there were given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time from the face of the serpent.

Rev. 12:15 And the serpent cast water as a river out of his mouth after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away by its current.

Rev. 12:16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

Rev. 12:17 And the dragon became angry with the woman and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.

2. **He will set up the idol of abomination in the temple to replace God, and he will carry out a great destruction to cause desolation—Matt. 24:15.**

Matt. 24:15 Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him who reads understand).

3. **Until Christ comes to the earth. Then Christ will slay Antichrist by the breath of His mouth and bring Antichrist to nothing by the manifestation of His coming—2 Thes. 2:8; Rev. 19:19-20.**

2 Thes. 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed (whom the Lord Jesus will slay by the breath of His mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of His coming).

Rev. 19:19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with Him who sits on the horse and with His army.

Rev. 19:20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet, who in his presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two

were cast alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone.

IV. The secret and open aspects of Christ's second coming—Rev. 3:3, 16:15, 1:7, 18:1:

Rev. 3:3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and keep it and repent. If therefore you will not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall by no means know at what hour I will come upon you.

Rev. 16:15 (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments that he may not walk naked and they see his shame.)

Rev. 1:7 Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him. Yes, amen.

Rev. 18:1 After these things I saw another Angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was illumined with His glory.

A. In the secret aspect of His second coming—parousia, Christ will come as a thief to those who love Him and will take them away as His treasures—Matt. 24:43:

Matt. 24:43 But know this, that if the householder had known in which watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

1. The day and hour of Christ's secret coming are unknown—Matt. 24:36, 42, 25:13.

Matt. 24:36 But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but the Father only.

Matt. 24:42 Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes.

Matt. 25:13 Watch therefore, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

2. The place of Christ's secret coming is in the clouds in the air—Rev. 10:1; 1 Thes. 4:17.

Rev. 10:1 And I saw another strong Angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon His head, and His face was like the sun, and His feet like pillars of fire.

1 Thes. 4:17 Then we who are living, who are left remaining, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will be always with the Lord.

3. The secret coming of Christ is a reward to the watchful believers—Rev. 2:28; Matt. 24:42, 44.

Rev. 2:28 And to him I will give the morning star.

Matt. 24:42 Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes.

Matt. 24:44 For this reason you also be ready, because at an hour when you do not expect it, the Son of Man is coming.

B. In the open aspect of His second coming—epiphania, Christ will come with power and great glory and be seen by all the tribes of the land—Rev. 1:7:

Rev. 1:7 Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him. Yes, amen.

1. The day of His coming in the open aspect will be at the last trumpet, at the end of the great tribulation—Rev. 18:1; Matt. 24:15, 21, 27; 1 Thes. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52; 2 Thes. 2:1-4, 8.

Rev. 18:1 After these things I saw another Angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was illumined with His glory.

Matt. 24:15 Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him who reads understand).

Matt. 24:21 For at that time there will be great tribulation, such as has not occurred from the beginning of the world until now, nor shall by any means ever occur.

Matt. 24:27 For just as the lightning comes forth from the east and shines to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

1 Thes. 4:16 Because the Lord Himself, with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Cor. 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed.

2 Thes. 2:1 Now we ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,

2 Thes. 2:2 That you be not quickly shaken in mind nor alarmed, neither by a spirit nor by word nor by a letter as if by us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

2 Thes. 2:3 Let no one deceive you in any way, because it will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition,

2 Thes. 2:4 Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or an object of worship, so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth, saying that he is God.

2 Thes. 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed (whom the Lord Jesus will slay by the breath of His mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of His coming).

2. The place of Christ's open coming is on the cloud to the earth—Rev. 1:7, 14:14; Matt. 24:30; Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:11-12.

Rev. 1:7 Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him. Yes, amen.

Rev. 14:14 And I saw, and behold, there was a white cloud, and on the cloud One like the Son of Man sitting, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

Matt. 24:30 And at that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Zech. 14:4 And His feet will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split at its middle toward the east and toward the west into a very great valley, so that half of the mountain will remove to the north and half of it to the south.

Acts 1:11 Who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven.

Acts 1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

3. In Christ's open coming, He with His overcoming saints will make war with Antichrist and his army in Armageddon—Rev. 19:11-21, 17:13-14, 16:12-16, Zech. 14:3, 5; 2 Thes. 2:8.

Rev. 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

Rev. 19:12 And His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written which no one knows but Himself.

Rev. 19:13 And He is clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God.

Rev. 19:14 And the armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

Rev. 19:15 And out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it He might smite the nations; and He will shepherd them with an iron rod; and He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Rev. 19:16 And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Rev. 19:17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Come here; gather yourselves to the great dinner of God,

Rev. 19:18 That you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of generals and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free and slave and small and great.

Rev. 19:19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with Him who sits on the horse and with His army.

Rev. 19:20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet, who in his presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone.

Rev. 19:21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeds out of the mouth of Him who sits on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Rev. 17:13 These have one mind, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

Rev. 17:14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they who are with Him, the called and chosen and faithful, will also overcome them.

Rev. 16:12 And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river Euphrates; and its water was dried up that the way of the kings from the rising of the sun might be prepared.

Rev. 16:13 And I saw, out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits as frogs;

Rev. 16:14 For they are spirits of demons doing signs, which go forth to the kings of the whole inhabited earth to gather them to the war of the great day of God the Almighty.

Rev. 16:15 (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments that he may not walk naked and they see his shame.)

Rev. 16:16 And they gathered them to the place which in Hebrew is called, Armageddon.

Zech. 14:3 Then Jehovah will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights in a day of battle.

Zech. 14:5 And you will flee into the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach unto Azel; yes, you will flee, just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah the king of Judah. And Jehovah my

God will come, and all the saints with Him.

2 Thes. 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed (whom the Lord Jesus will slay by the breath of His mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of His coming).

V. The signs of Christ's second coming and the consummation of the age:

A. The great tribulation—Matt. 24:21; Luke 21:34-36; Rev. 3:10.

Matt. 24:21 For at that time there will be great tribulation, such as has not occurred from the beginning of the world until now, nor shall by any means ever occur.

Luke 21:34 But take heed to yourselves lest perhaps your hearts be weighed down with debauchery and drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day come upon you suddenly as a snare.

Luke 21:35 For it will come in upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth.

Luke 21:36 But be watchful at every time, beseeching that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.

Rev. 3:10 Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.

B. The Antichrist—Matt. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:3-4, 8.

Matt. 24:15 Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him who reads understand).

2 Thes. 2:3 Let no one deceive you in any way, because it will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition,

2 Thes. 2:4 Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or an object of worship, so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth, saying that he is God.

2 Thes. 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed (whom the Lord Jesus will slay by the breath of His mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of His coming).

C. The fig tree—Matt. 24:32-33.

Matt. 24:32 But learn the parable from the fig tree: As soon as its branch has become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near.

Matt. 24:33 So also you, when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the

doors.

D. The rapture of the saints—Matt. 24:36-42; 1 Thes. 4:16-17.

Matt. 24:36 But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but the Father only.

Matt. 24:37 For just as the days of Noah were, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Matt. 24:38 For as they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day in which Noah entered into the ark,

Matt. 24:39 And they did not know that judgment was coming until the flood came and took all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Matt. 24:40 At that time two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left.

Matt. 24:41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left.

Matt. 24:42 Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes.

1 Thes. 4:16 Because the Lord Himself, with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thes. 4:17 Then we who are living, who are left remaining, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will be always with the Lord.

VI. The believers' attitudes toward the coming of Christ:

A. Loving it—2 Tim. 4:8.

2 Tim. 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.

B. Awaiting it—Phil. 3:20.

Phil. 3:20 For our commonwealth exists in the heavens, from which also we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Taking it as an encouragement—2 Tim. 4:1.

2 Tim. 4:1 I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

D. Watching and being ready for it—Matt. 24:42-44, 25:13:

Matt. 24:42 Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes.

Matt. 24:43 But know this, that if the householder had known in which watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

Matt. 24:44 For this reason you also be ready, because at an hour when you do not expect it, the Son of Man is coming.

Matt. 25:13 Watch therefore, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

1. Be watchful in life, preparing oil in the vessel—Matt. 25:1-4.

Matt. 25:1 At that time the kingdom of the heavens will be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

Matt. 25:2 And five of them were foolish and five were prudent.

Matt. 25:3 For the foolish, when they took their lamps, did not take oil with them;

Matt. 25:4 But the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

2. Be faithful in service, exercising the gift which the Lord has given to us—Matt. 25:14-30.

Matt. 25:14 For the kingdom of the heavens is just like a man about to go abroad, who called his own slaves and delivered to them his possessions.

Matt. 25:15 To one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability. And he went abroad.

Matt. 25:16 Immediately he who had received the five talents went and traded with them and gained another five.

Matt. 25:17 Similarly, he who had received the two gained another two.

Matt. 25:18 But he who had received the one went off and dug in the earth and hid his master's money.

Matt. 25:19 Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

Matt. 25:20 And he who had received the five talents came and brought another five talents, saying, Master, you delivered to me five talents; behold, I have gained another five talents.

Matt. 25:21 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

Matt. 25:22 And he who had received the two talents also came and said, Master, you delivered to me two talents; behold, I have gained another two talents.

Matt. 25:23 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

Matt. 25:24 Then he who had received the one talent also came and said, Master, I knew about you, that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow.

Matt. 25:25 And I was afraid and went off and hid your talent in the earth; behold, you have what is yours.

Matt. 25:26 And his master answered and said to him, Evil and slothful slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not winnow.

Matt. 25:27 Therefore you should have deposited my money with the money changers; and when I came, I would have recovered what is mine with interest.

Matt. 25:28 Take away therefore the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.

Matt. 25:29 For to every one who has, more shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him who does not have, even that which he has shall be taken away from him.

Matt. 25:30 And cast out the useless slave into the outer darkness. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

E. Beseeching to prevail—Luke 21:36.

Luke 21:36 But be watchful at every time, beseeching that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.

REFERENCE

Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 6, Ch. 60, Presentation of the God-Ordained Way and the Prophecies Concerning Christ's Coming, Chs. 6-7.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE DEFINITION OF THE SECOND COMING

"He will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven." The original Greek for the word "come" here is erchomai, which means come. This shows us that the Lord's second coming will be an actual coming. It is not a figure of speech as some people think. Throughout the ages, some in Christianity have thought that the Lord's return as spoken of in the Bible is only a figure of speech, but not as actual coming. They say that when the believers die and their souls and spirits go to see the Lord, then that is the Lord's second coming. But here it tells us that the Lord's

second coming will be as real as His ascension. He will come in the same way as He ascended into heaven. He went into heaven in a cloud (Acts 1:9), and He will return on a cloud (Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Rev. 1:7). He ascended into heaven on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:11-12), and He will return on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 6, Ch. 60)

SEVENTY WEEKS BEING APPORTIONED OUT BY GOD

At about 606 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, conquered Jerusalem and carried away all the children of Israel as captives, among whom was Daniel. At that time Daniel was a youth in his teens. He loved God and feared God, and for God's holy city and holy temple he humbled himself before God, praying and giving thanks to God three times a day. At the time when the seventy years of Israel's captivity were about to be completed, he understood by the books that contained the word of God to Jeremiah that the number of Years determined by God for the accomplishing of the desolation of Jerusalem was seventy years. Therefore, he sought God by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. God sent an angel to speak to Daniel: "Seventy weeks are apportioned out for your people and for your holy city, to close transgression, to make an end of sins, to make propitiation for iniquity, to bring in the righteousness of the ages, to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint the most holy place" (Dan. 9:24, new translation).

The seventy weeks were divided into three sections. The first section consists of seven weeks, counting from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes (Neh. 2:1-8). First, King Cyrus defeated Babylon, and, moved by God, he made a proclamation that all the children of Israel should go back to rebuild the holy temple; then, Artaxerxes issued a decree for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The period from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the completion of the restoration and rebuilding was a total of forty-nine years. Thus Jerusalem was built again with street and moat (Dan. 9:25). The second section of the seventy weeks

consists of sixty-two weeks, from the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the cutting off of the anointed One (Messiah—Christ), a total of four hundred thirty-four years. In that very year, the four hundred thirty-fourth year, on the fourteenth day of the first month, the day of the Passover, the Lord Jesus was crucified. At a later time, the people of the price who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end of it will be with a flood, and even to the end there will be war; the desolations are determined (Dan. 9:26). Thus, the first section plus the second section equals sixty-nine weeks.

At this point the seventy weeks were interrupted. A long period of time would follow before the last week would come. It is not possible to find out the length of this interval. This interval is the age of the church, which is the age of grace. It is also called the age of mysteries. This age begins and ends with the two comings of Christ.

When will this age come to an end? When will the last week come? This Bible clearly reveals that at the beginning of the last week, Antichrist will make a firm covenant with Israel for seven years; in the middle of the seven years he will break the covenant, terminate Israel's sacrifices and oblations to God, and persecute those who fear God (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 12:13-17). He will set up the idol of abomination in the temple to replace God, and he will carry out a great destruction to cause desolation (Matt. 24:15) until Christ comes to the earth. Then Christ will slay Antichrist by the breath of His mouth and bring Antichrist to nothing by the manifestation of His coming (2 Thes. 2:8; Rev. 19:19-20). According to the plain words and the revelation in the Bible, the coming of the last week is related to the following few things: Antichrist and the restored Roman Empire, the restoration of Israel (including the rebuilding of the temple), the great tribulation, and the rapture of the saints. (The Presentation of God-Ordained Way and the Prophecies Concerning Christ's Coming, pp. 52-54)

THE SECRET AND OPEN ASPECTS

OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

If we would understand the Lord's return, we must understand the word "parousia." If we do not understand that this word refers to a coming that lasts for a period of time, then we will not be able to understand why the time for the Lord's return is so long that it begins before the great tribulation but does not end until the end of the tribulation. It is a coming that lasts for at least three and one half years. At the same time, we will be unable to understand why some places in the Bible tells us that the Lord's coming is before the great tribulation, while other places tell us that His coming is after the great tribulation. If we see that the Lord's second coming is a "parousia," that is, a period of time, then these questions will be spontaneously answered. Because the Lord's second coming is a period of time, it takes a long time from its beginning to its end. Because the Lord's second coming is a period of time, its beginning is before the great tribulation, and its ending is at the end of the great tribulation.

The Bible thus shows us that the Lord's second coming is an actual coming, that the Lord Himself will descend from the heavens to be manifested to men. His coming with respect to His believers is a long period of the time of His presence which begins before the great tribulation and ends at the end of the great tribulation. It will last for at least three and one half years. At the end of the great tribulation, the coming of His presence will be manifested, and this will be when He comes to the earth to appear to men. Therefore, His coming is hidden and secret at its beginning, and is manifested and open at its end. If we would understand the Lord's second coming, we must understand and remember these fine details, or we will not be able to be clear.

The Lord's second coming has two aspects: one is the hidden, secret aspect and one is the manifested, open aspect. The hidden aspect is "parousia," while the open aspect is "epiphaneia." The Lord's "parousia," the coming of His presence, secretly begins before the great tribulation. Beginning at that time, the Lord will start to come and secretly rapture the overcoming believers to His presence, just as a thief steals precious things.

The Lord considers His overcoming believers to be precious. Just before the great tribulation comes upon the earth, the Lord will come secretly, hiddenly when people are least expecting it, to rapture His beloved, overcoming believers to the heaven to His presence. In doing this, it will seem that He has stolen His beloved believers. After He steals them by rapturing them, people will realize that they are no longer here. This is just like when a thief steals things, the articles are long gone before people realize they are missing. Before the great tribulation, the Lord will come to steal, to rapture the overcoming believers in this way. This is the hidden aspect of His second coming. It is the condition of the beginning of His "parousia."

The other aspect is at the end of the great tribulation when the Lord will descend from heaven and be manifested. At this time, He will descend on the clouds and appear in the sky. He will be like lightening which all the people on earth can see. This is the open aspect of His second coming. It is the condition of the manifestation of His "parousia."

Thus, the Lord's second coming has a hidden aspect and an open aspect. Only the watchful, overcoming believers who are waiting for Him will know about and participate in the hidden aspect. All people will see the open aspect, and all the believers will participate in it. If we want to participate in the hidden aspect of the Lord's second coming, if we want to have a part in the beginning of the Lord's "parousia," we must be a watchful, ready overcomer who is waiting for the Lord's coming. If we are not, then we will only participate in the open aspect of the Lord's second coming. We will only be able to participate in the "epiphaneia," the manifestation of the Lord's coming, when the Lord's "parousia" is nearly at an end. (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 6, Ch. 60)

THE SIGNS OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING AND THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE

The Great Tribulation

The second half of the last week, the last three and a half years of this age, is the period of the great tribulation, such as has not occurred from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be (Matt. 24:21). This period will begin with the supernatural calamities in the sixth seal of the seven seals (Rev. 6:12-17) and will end at the seventh bowl of the seven bowls (Rev. 16:1-21). It will be "the hour of trial which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10). This great tribulation will come from three directions—from God, from Antichrist, and from Satan—upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth (Luke 21:35). At that time God will judge the entire universe with supernatural calamities, so that the earth will not be suitable for man's existence. It seems that God will say to the men on earth, "I created all things for your existence, and My purpose is that you would fear Me, serve Me, love Me, and pursue after Me; yet you cooperate with Satan to oppose Me and reject Me. Now I am shaking the earth and the heavens; see if you will still be able to live peacefully." Furthermore, Satan will be cast out of heaven to the earth by the overcomers, and knowing that he has a short time, he will collaborate with Antichrist, and the two will do their best to destroy and injure the human race, and they will severely persecute the Jews and the Christians (Rev. 12:7-13, 17). However, for the preservation of His people, God will limit the time of the great tribulation to only three and a half years; otherwise, no flesh would be saved. (The Presentation of God-Ordained Way and the Prophecies Concerning Christ's Coming, pp. 58-59)

The Antichrist

Matthew 24:3 says, "And as He sat on the mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, Tell us, …what is the sign of Your coming and of the consummation of the age?" In His reply in the succeeding verses, the Lord first spoke concerning Antichrist. In verse 15 the Lord said: "When therefore you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him who reads

understand).” This will definitely be fulfilled in the last three and a half years of the present age, the time of the great tribulation, the second half of the last week. At that time Antichrist’s image will be set up as an idol in the temple of God.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Paul also said, “Let no one deceive you in any way; because it will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or an object of worship, so that he seats himself in the temple of God, proclaiming himself that he is God.” This shows us that before the consummation of the age, Antichrist must first appear; he will play a leading role in the last week.

Revelation 13:1 points out that a beast, which signifies Antichrist, will come up out of the Mediterranean Sea. This beast has seven heads and ten horns. Revelation 17:8 11 tells us the origin of this beast. The seven heads of the beast are seven Caesars of the Roman Empire. According to historical records, the Roman Empire had a total of twelve Caesars, but only six of them were referred to in Revelation, because all these six were “fallen” (Rev. 17:10 and note); that is, they all died unnaturally—they either committed suicide or were murdered, their throne being usurped. Antichrist, the seventh Caesar, will come from one of the Gentile nations around the Mediterranean Sea. He will have the support of ten kings, and they will unite to form a great empire, which will be the revived Roman Empire. He will make a covenant with Israel for seven years and permit them to freely worship God. After three and a half years, Antichrist will be slain temporarily; then the spirit of the fifth Caesar (Nero) of the Roman Empire will come up out of the abyss and enter into the dead body of Antichrist to resurrect him to be the eighth Caesar. Antichrist will break the covenant and begin to persecute the Israelites and the Christians. He will also set up his image in the temple (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:4), until the complete destruction that is determined will be poured out upon the desolator, that is, upon Antichrist (Dan. 9:27).

Antichrist will be the Caesar of the revived Roman Empire. Once he

makes a seven-year covenant with Israel, that will be the beginning of the last week. Today this last week is not yet manifested because the Roman Empire is not yet revived; but as we observe the world situation, it seems that the restoration of the Roman Empire will take place soon. In the previous two years we all have seen the great change in the world situation, a change that is beyond or imagination. First, the Soviet Union is proceeding with a reformation and has declared her renunciation of communism. Then a number of her satellite countries have risen up to copy her action. Now East Germany and West Germany are unified. Thus, the entire situation in Europe is pushing toward the direction prophesied in the Bible for the restoration of the Roman Empire. When that time comes, Antichrist will appear.

The Fig Tree

The Restoration of Israel

In Matthew 24 the Lord gave a clear revelation concerning the restoration of Israel. In verse 32 the Lord said, "But learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near." To the saints, the fig tree is a sign of the consummation of the age. In Matthew 21:19, during His last visit to Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus cursed a fig tree because He could not find any fruit on it. The fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel (Jer. 24:2, 5, 8). Because Israel was stubborn and rebellious and had no fruit that could satisfy God, she was rejected by God. In A.D. 70, Titus, the Roman prince, brought with him a great army to destroy Jerusalem and the temple, as prophesied by the Lord when He said, "A stone shall by no means be left upon a stone which shall not be thrown down"(Matt. 24:2). From that time, the children of Israel were scattered among the nations. Not only did their nation fall, but even their homeland was lost. Humanly speaking, there was truly no hope for the nation of Israel to be reformed. However, the Bible contains a prophecy saying that one day the cursed and dried up fig tree would become tender and put forth leaves.

The Rebuilding of the Temple

Concerning the rebuilding of the temple, first we need to see the two halves of the last week. The last week will be cut into two halves by Antichrist's abolishing of the seven-year covenant he will make with Israel. In the first three and a half years, Antichrist will support the children of Israel, permitting them to freely worship God; in the latter three and a half years, Antichrist will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease (Dan. 12:7; 9:27) and replace them with an idol of himself. In Matthew 24:15, the holy place in which Antichrist's image will stand refers to the sanctuary within the temple (Psa. 68:35; Ezek. 7:24; 21:2) and the abomination refers to the image of Antichrist as an idol. In other words, the idol will remain in the temple for three and a half years until Christ will destroy Antichrist by the manifestation of His coming. Therefore, first the temple will have to be rebuilt; then the children of Israel will be able to worship God and offer sacrifices to Him, and Antichrist will be able to set up his image.

Since A.D. 70, when Titus destroyed the temple, the temple has never been rebuilt. Israel has regained Jerusalem and is actively making preparations for the rebuilding of the temple. All the materials that will be needed for the rebuilding of the temple and all the utensils needed for the sacrifices have been prepared according to what is recorded in the Bible. Now they are waiting for the suitable time to come, and the rebuilding of the temple will be completed. (pp. 54-58)

The Rapture of the Saints

Before the great tribulation, the overcomers will be raptured, leaving the majority of the believers, those who are not yet mature, on the earth to pass through the great tribulation. Matthew 24:40-41 says, "Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left." This indicates that while the worldly people are befuddle by material things, with no sense of the coming judgment, some of the sober and watchful believers will be taken away. To the befuddled and senseless people, this should be a sign of

Christ's coming. Therefore, we should take heed to ourselves, lest at some time our hearts be weighed down with debauchery and drunkenness and the anxieties of life (Luke 21:34), and we miss the rapture and become like Lot's wife. (p. 59)

THE BELIEVERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE COMING OF CHRIST

Loving It, Awaiting It, Taking It As An Encouragement

Since we know that the Lord's second coming is so precious, we should love the Lord's appearing (2 Tim. 4:8). The Bible concludes with "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). From the record in the New Testament, it is not difficult to discover that in their hearts the apostles firmly believed that the Lord would come quickly, and they also lived a life in preparation for the Lord's second coming. In the church's history, I know that Miss M.E. Barber was one who lived such a life. On the last day of 1925, Brother Nee went to pray with her, and she prayed, "Lord, do You really mean to say that You will let 1925 pass by, that You will wait until 1926 before You come back? However, on this last day I still pray that You will come back today!" Not long afterwards, Brother Nee met her on the street, and again she said to him, "It is really strange that up to this day He has not yet come back." Do not think that since we are clear concerning the signs of the Lord's coming, we can be slothful and can first love the world and then pursue the Lord when the last week comes. There is no such convenience. We should believe that the Lord is to be feared. In Luke 12 the Lord gave a parable concerning a rich man who endeavored to lay up wealth for himself so that his soul might enjoy itself and be merry. But God said to him, "Senseless one, this night they are requiring your soul from you" (vv. 16-20). Every "today" that we have is truly the Lord's grace. Therefore, as long as we have today, as long as we still have breath, we should love the Lord and His appearing, await the Lord's coming (Phil. 3:20), and always take His coming as an encouragement.

In 2 Timothy 4:1 Paul said to Timothy, "I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is about to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom." This is an exhortation from Paul immediately before his martyrdom. He said that he had fought the good fight, he had finished the course, and he had kept the faith, and that at the judgment seat he would be awarded the crown of righteousness, which would be awarded to all those who have loved His appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8). He reminded Timothy, and also us, by the Lord's judgment and kingdom that we should have a living that loves the Lord's appearing. This will cause us not to be discouraged, not to backslide, not to become weak, but to remain faithful to the end. (pp. 67-69)

Be Watchful And Ready, Beseeching To Prevail

After we have seen and are clear about all these prophecies, we need to be watchful and to give heed to the prophetic word as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts (2 Pet. 1:19). Prior to His open appearing as the sun, the Lord will appear as the morning star in the darkest hour of the night to those who are longing for His appearing. The prophetic word of the Scripture, as the shining lamp to the believers, conveys spiritual light to shine in their darkness, guiding them to enter into a bright day until the day of the Lord's appearing.

This time is short. By studying the prophecies in the Bible and checking with the world situation today, we know that the day of the Lord's coming is very near and that the last week is approaching. The crucial question today is this: Do we want to bury ourselves in the world or put ourselves it the Lord's hand? We should know that once we bury ourselves in the world and become rooted in it, it will not be easy to be uprooted. It the few remaining days, we should get ourselves ready. Let us be those who love and serve the Lord, who are revived and are overcoming every day, and who let the world go and are waiting with all our heart for the Lord's coming. (p. 69)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the relationship between the seventy weeks and Christ's second coming.

2. What are the two aspects of Christ's second coming?

3. What are the signs of Christ's second coming and the consummation of the age?

4. What should be the believers' attitude toward Christ's second coming?

LESSON TWENTY-ONE

THE RAPTURE OF THE BELIEVERS

Scripture Reading:

Matt. 24:40-41 At that time two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left.

Rev. 3:10 Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.

Luke 21:36 But be watchful at every time, beseeching that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.

Hymn: 960

OUTLINE

I. The rapture is not mainly for our enjoyment but for God's enjoyment and for the fulfillment of God's purpose—Rev. 12:5, 7-10, 14:1, 4b :

Rev. 12:5 And she brought forth a son, a man-child, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

Rev. 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels went to war with the dragon. And the dragon warred and his angels.

Rev. 12:8 And they did not prevail, neither was their place found any longer in heaven.

Rev. 12:9 And the great dragon was cast down, the ancient serpent, he who is called the Devil and Satan, he who deceives the whole inhabited earth; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.

Rev. 12:10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night.

Rev. 14:1 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of

His Father written on their foreheads.

Rev. 14:4b These were purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

A. To be raptured is to be taken into the Lord's presence. If we want to be taken into the Lord's presence, we have to be in His presence today—Luke 21:36; 2 Cor. 2:10.

Luke 21:36 But be watchful at every time, beseeching that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.

2 Cor. 2:10 But whom you forgive anything, I also forgive; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, it is for your sake in the person of Christ.

B. The rapture is for defeating the enemy and for satisfying God—Rev. 12:5, 14:1, 4b.

Rev. 12:5 And she brought forth a son, a man-child, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

Rev. 14:1 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

Rev. 14:4b These were purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

II. The Bible reveals two aspects of the rapture: the rapture of the overcomers and the rapture of the majority of the saints—Matt. 24:40-41; Luke 21:36; Rev. 3:10; 1 Thes. 4:15-17; Rev. 12:5, 14:1:

Matt. 24:40 At that time two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left.

Matt. 24:41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left.

Luke 21:36 But be watchful at every time, beseeching that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.

Rev. 3:10 Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.

1 Thes. 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are living, who are left remaining unto the coming of the Lord, shall by no means precede those who have fallen asleep;

1 Thes. 4:16 Because the Lord Himself, with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven,

and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thes. 4:17 Then we who are living, who are left remaining, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will be always with the Lord.

Rev. 12:5 And she brought forth a son, a man-child, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

Rev. 14:1 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

A. In Leviticus 23:10, we see a type of the rapture—the type of the crops ripening in the field—Matt. 13:24; Rev. 14:14-16.

Lev. 23:10 Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, When you come into the land which I am giving you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.

Matt. 13:24 Another parable He set before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man sowing good seed in his field.

Rev. 14:14 And I saw, and behold, there was a white cloud, and on the cloud One like the Son of Man sitting, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

Rev. 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, Send forth Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come because the harvest of the earth is ripe.

Rev. 14:16 And He who sat on the cloud thrust His sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped.

B. According to Revelation 14, there are two kind of rapture, the rapture of firstfruit and the rapture of harvest—Rev. 14:4b, 14-15.

Rev. 14:4b These were purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Rev. 14:14 And I saw, and behold, there was a white cloud, and on the cloud One like the Son of Man sitting, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

Rev. 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, Send forth Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come because the harvest of the earth is ripe.

III. The man-child in Rev. 12:1-11 consists of the dead and resurrected overcomers:

Rev. 12:1 And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun,

and the moon underneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars;

Rev. 12:2 And she was with child, and she cried out, travailing in birth and being in pain to bring forth.

Rev. 12:3 And another sign was seen in heaven; and behold, there was a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.

Rev. 12:4 And his tail drags away the third part of the stars of heaven, and he cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, so that when she brings forth he might devour her child.

Rev. 12:5 And she brought forth a son, a man-child, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

Rev. 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place there prepared by God so that they might nourish her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Rev. 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels went to war with the dragon. And the dragon warred and his angels.

Rev. 12:8 And they did not prevail, neither was their place found any longer in heaven.

Rev. 12:9 And the great dragon was cast down, the ancient serpent, he who is called the Devil and Satan, he who deceives the whole inhabited earth; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.

Rev. 12:10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night.

Rev. 12:11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.

A. The man-child is not caught up to the air but to the throne of God—Rev. 12:5.

Rev. 12:5 And she brought forth a son, a man-child, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

B. This rapture will transpire before the three and one-half years of the great tribulation—Rev. 12:6, 14.

Rev. 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place there

prepared by God so that they might nourish her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Rev. 12:14 And to the woman there were given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time from the face of the serpent.

C. Revelation 12:11 indicates that the overcomers who are part of the man-child are faithful unto death, many of them have been martyred.

Rev. 12:11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.

1. And the brothers overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony.

2. They loved not their soul-life even unto death.

D. The man-child in Revelation is begotten, brought forth in birth.

1. The Lord Jesus was begotton of God to be the Firstborn Son in resurrection—Heb. 1:5; Acts 10:33.

Heb. 1:5 For to which of the angels has He ever said, "You are My Son; this day have I begotten You"? And again, "I will be a Father to Him, and He will be a Son to Me"?

Acts 10:33 Therefore I sent men at once to you, and you have done nobly in coming. Now therefore we all are present before God to hear all the things that have been commanded to you by the Lord.

2. The man-child will also be begotten in resurrection.

IV. The firstfruit in Revelation 14:1-5 being the living overcomers, reaped before the harvest as firstfruit to God and to the Lamb:

Rev. 14:1 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

Rev. 14:2 And I heard a voice out of heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harp-singers playing on their harps.

Rev. 14:3 And they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the hundred and forty-four thousand, who have been purchased from the

earth.

Rev. 14:4 These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Rev. 14:5 And in their mouth no lie was found; they are without blemish.

A. The firstfruit will be caught up to the heavenly mount Zion, to the place of God's dwelling in the third heaven, to be in the presence of God and Christ—Rev. 14:1, 4b.

B. The firstfruit are raptured to the house of God in Zion as the fresh enjoyment of God for God's satisfaction—Exo. 23:19a; Lev. 23:10; cf. John 20:17a.

Exo. 23:19a The first of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of Jehovah your God…

Lev. 23:10 Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, When you come into the land which I am giving you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.

John 20:17 Jesus said to her, Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.

C. The firstfruit have the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. This is the designation of their being one with the Lamb and with the Father and of their belonging to Them—Rev. 14:1.

Rev. 14:1 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

D. The firstfruit is the first ripe ones among God's crop—Heb. 5:14, 6:1; 1 Cor. 2:6, Eph. 4:13, Phil. 3:15:

Heb. 5:14 But solid food is for the full-grown, who because of practice have their faculties exercised for discriminating between both good and evil.

Heb. 6:1 Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God.

1 Cor. 2:6 But we do speak wisdom among those who are full-grown, yet a wisdom not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are being brought to nought.

Eph. 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge

of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Phil. 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.

1. Being transformed is to have a change in our natural life; to be matured is to be filled with the divine life that changes us—Rom. 12:2, Eph. 3:19b.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

Eph. 3:19b That you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

2. Maturity is needed in order to be God's expression; only the matured life bears God's image, to carry out His authority—Gen. 1:26.

Gen. 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

V. The harvest in Revelation 14:14-16 being the rapture of majority of the saints:

Rev. 14:14 And I saw, and behold, there was a white cloud, and on the cloud One like the Son of Man sitting, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

Rev. 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, Send forth Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come because the harvest of the earth is ripe.

Rev. 14:16 And He who sat on the cloud thrust His sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped.

A. The firstfruit will be brought to the throne of God in the heavens before the great tribulation; the harvest will be taken to the barn in the air (Matt. 13:30, 3:12) at the sound of the last trumpet near the end of the great tribulation—1 Thes. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 10:7.

Matt. 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Collect first the tares and bind them into bundles to burn them up, but the wheat gather into my barn.

Matt. 3:12 Whose winnowing fan is in His hand. And He will thoroughly cleanse

His threshing floor and will gather His wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire.

1 Thes. 4:16 Because the Lord Himself, with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thes. 4:17 Then we who are living, who are left remaining, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will be always with the Lord.

1 Cor. 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed.

Rev. 10:7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel when he is about to trumpet, then the mystery of God is finished, as He has announced the good news to His own slaves the prophets.

B. Those included in the rapture of the harvest has to pass through great tribulation—Matt. 24:21; Rev. 3:10.

Matt. 24:21 For at that time there will be great tribulation, such as has not occurred from the beginning of the world until now, nor shall by any means ever occur.

Rev. 3:10 Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.

1. The harvest will be left to pass through the great tribulation because green, unripened fields need strong sunshine in order to ripen—Rev. 14:15; Matt. 13:39b.

Rev. 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, Send forth Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come because the harvest of the earth is ripe.

Matt. 13:39b …And the harvest is the consummation of the age; and the reapers are angels.

2. In a sense, the great tribulation will be the strong sunshine which will ripen all the saints who will not be ready before the tribulation.

C. If today we do not give up the world and live for Christ, Christ will leave us on earth to pass through the great tribulation—Matt. 16:26; 2 Cor. 5:14-15.

Matt. 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his

soul-life?

2 Cor. 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;

2 Cor. 5:15 And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

D. Concerning the rapture, we must be warned and see God's purpose and our responsibility to coordinate with Him—2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 16:15.

2 Tim. 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.

Rev. 16:15 (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments that he may not walk naked and they see his shame.)

VI. Revelation 15:2-4 reveals the rapture of the late overcomers, they overcome the Antichrist, his mark, the number of his name, and his image:

Rev. 15:2 And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire and those who come away victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name standing on the glassy sea, having harps of God.

Rev. 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty! Righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!

Rev. 15:4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; for all the nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous judgments have been manifested.

A. Although they are slain by antichrist, in the eyes of God they are victorious.

B. The late overcomers sing the Song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb—Rev. 15:3a:

1. The Song of Moses indicates God's triumphant judgment over the enemy of His people—Exo. 15:1-18.

Exo. 15:1 Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Jehovah and spoke, saying, I will sing to Jehovah, for He has triumphed gloriously; The horse and its rider He has cast into the sea.

Exo. 15:2 Jah is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him.

Exo. 15:3 Jehovah is a man of war; Jehovah is His name.

Exo. 15:4 Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has thrown into the sea; And his choice officers have drowned in the Red Sea.

Exo. 15:5 The deep waters cover them; They went down into the depths like a stone.

Exo. 15:6 Your right hand, O Jehovah, is glorious in power; Your right hand, O Jehovah, dashed the enemy in pieces.

Exo. 15:7 And in the greatness of Your excellence You overthrew those who rose up against You. You sent forth Your burning wrath; It consumed them like stubble.

Exo. 15:8 And with the blast of Your nostrils the waters were heaped up; The flowing currents stood up like a heap; The deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea.

Exo. 15:9 The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire will be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword; my hand will destroy them.

Exo. 15:10 You blew with Your wind; the sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Exo. 15:11 Who is like You, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like You, splendid in holiness, Awesome in praises, doing wonders?

Exo. 15:12 You stretched out Your right hand; The earth swallowed them.

Exo. 15:13 In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation.

Exo. 15:14 The peoples heard; they trembled. Pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.

Exo. 15:15 Then the chiefs of Edom are dismayed; The mighty men of Moab, trembling has seized them; All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.

Exo. 15:16 Terror and dread have fallen upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they have become as still as stone, Until Your people passed over, O Jehovah, Until the people whom You purchased passed over.

Exo. 15:17 You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, The place, O Jehovah, which You have made for Your dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.

Exo. 15:18 Jehovah shall reign forever and ever.

2. The Song of Lamb indicates Christ redemption experienced by God's people in the presence of their enemy.

C. The late overcomers praise God's works and His ways, which is His acts and His governing principles—Rev. 15:3b-4; Psa. 103:7.

Rev. 15:3b Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty! Righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!

Rev. 15:4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; for all the nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous judgments have been manifested.

Psa. 103:7 He made His ways known to Moses; His acts, to the children of Israel.

REFERENCE

Life-Study of Revelation, Chs. 3, 29-30, 38, 46, 48-49; The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 5, Ch. 113.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE RAPTURE IS FOR GOD'S ENJOYMENT AND FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE

We must be raptured to the heavens to fulfill God's need. ...Religion is for human happiness, for having a good life in a merry land after we die. This thought is devilish. But, alas, this concept has infiltrated all of Christianity. Christians only care for their happiness, saying, "We like to have joy and a happy life. We want to go to heaven when we die, for we shall be happy there." In Christianity you probably never heard that God has an eternal purpose and that we must fulfill God's purpose. We need to be raptured to heaven, not for our happiness, but for the fulfilling of God's purpose. We must go there to execute God's judgment upon His enemy. God is waiting for this.

I say again that the rapture is not for our happiness; it is for God's purpose. Our God is waiting for the overcomers, the man-child, to go to heaven to execute His judgment upon the enemy. What a privilege it is to share in this! The angels are not positioned to share this privilege, but we are. Now we have the ground to say, "Praise the Lord that I am in the position to be an overcomer!" (Life-Study of Revelation, pp. 449 452)

TWO ASPECTS OF THE RAPTURE: THE RAPTURE OF THE OVERCOMERS AND THE RAPTURE OF THE MAJORITY OF THE SAINTS

Revelation 14:15 -16 says, "And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him Who sat on the cloud, Send forth Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He Who sat on the cloud thrust His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped." The harvest of the earth is God's people on earth, the believers in Christ (1 Cor. 3:9). At His first coming to the earth, the Lord sowed Himself into His believers (Matt. 13:3-8, 24). All the believers since that time who have received Him as the seed of life have become the crop of God on earth. Those who ripen first will be reaped as the firstfruit to God before the great tribulation. …The majority will ripen with the help of the sufferings in the great tribulation and will be reaped near the end of the tribulation. (pp. 551-552)

THE MAN-CHILD IS THE DEAD OVERCOMERS IN RESURRECTION

Revelation 12:5 also says that the man-child "was caught up to God and to His throne." To be "caught up" is to be raptured. The rapture of the man-child differs from that of the majority of the believers, as mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. There, the rapture of the majority of the believers will be to the air, …but in 12:5 the rapture of the man-child will be to the throne of God. …the man-child will be caught up directly to the throne of God in the third heaven before the great tribulation.

The man-child (12:5) is composed of the dead overcomers in resurrection, and the firstfruit (14:1-5) are the living overcomers, those who have never passed through death. … The man-child in Revelation is begotten, brought forth in birth. Consider the Lord Jesus, He was begotten of God to be the Firstborn Son in resurrection (Heb. 1:5; Acts 13:33). The man-child will also be begotten in resurrection. The resurrection of the

man-child will be his birth. Revelation 12:11 says that the overcomers who are a part of the man-child are faithful unto death, overcoming the enemy by the blood and by the word of their testimony, and not loving their soul lives unto death. This indicates that all those included in the man-child are faithful unto death. Many of them have been martyred. (Life-Study of Revelation, p. 1225)

THE FIRSTFRUIT BEING THE LIVING OVERCOMER

Revelation 14:4b speaks of those who "were purchased from among men as firstfruit to God and to the Lamb." These are early overcomers who will be the first ripe ones in God's field. Hence, they will be reaped before the harvest as firstfruit to God and to the Lamb. According to verses 14 through 16, the harvest will be reaped later. This means that the firstfruit will be raptured to the heavens before the harvest, just as the firstfruit of the good land was reaped and brought into the temple of God before the harvest (Lev. 23:10-11; Exo. 23:19).

Whereas the man-child refers to the dead overcomers throughout all the dispensations, the firstfruit refers to the living overcomers at the end of this age. Just as the man-child will be caught up to the throne of God, so the firstfruit will be caught up to the heavenly mount Zion, to the place of God's dwelling in the third heaven. This means that the firstfruit will be raptured no to the air but to the third heaven in order to be in the presence of God and Christ.

The firstfruit are purchased from among men (Rev. 14:4) to be recaptured to mount Zion in the heavens, where the Lamb is, with His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads (v. 1). (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 1226)

THE REAPING OF THE HARVEST
BEING THE RAPTURE OF THE MAJORITY OF THE SAINTS

Following the firstfruits, in [Revelation] chapter fourteen, we have the harvest. [15]. …The harvest will be reaped near the end of the great

tribulation. It will be raptured to the air where Christ will be on the cloud. Why will the harvest be left to pass through the great tribulation? Because green, unripened fields need strong sunshine in order to ripen. In a sense, the great tribulation will be the strong sunshine which will ripen all the saints who will not be ready before the tribulation. To put it simply, if today you do not give up the world and live for Christ, Christ will leave you on earth to pass through the great tribulation. At that time, you will surely give up the world and realize that the best way to live is to live for Christ. All the children of God must do this; otherwise, they could never ripen. If you do not believe my word, I ask you to wait. …Perhaps you feel that the world is too lovely to give up. If so, the Lord may say, "Since you love the world so much, I will leave you with the world and let you find out whether it is really lovely." Then the Lord will shake the world, and eventually you will say, "Lord, I repent." That repentance, however, may be rather late. Do not wait until the great tribulation comes to repent. Repent now! Sooner or later, every real Christian must repent. I have the full assurance that eventually every saved one will realize that the world is not lovely but poisonous. The more you love the world, the more you are poisoned by it. The world is at enmity with God, and we all must despise it. Sooner or later, the Lord will cause you to realize how much He hates this world. The day will come when all of us will be ripe. But do not say, "I don't care about being ripe. As long as I'm saved, everything will be all right." You may be able to argue against me with your strong, stubborn will, but the day will come when you will realize that you need to ripen. I advise you not to wait for the harvest. By His grace, come forward to be a part of the firstfruits. (Life-Study of Revelation, pp. 33-34).

The harvest will be reaped by Christ as the reaper toward the end of the great tribulation…according to Revelation 14:14, the harvest will be reaped by Christ as the Son of Man. He came as the Son of Man to sow the seed, and He will come again as the Son of Man to reap what He has sown. …[In verse 16], the reaping here will be the rapture of the majority of the believers who will be left on the earth to pass through the greater part of the great

tribulation. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 1230)

THE RAPTURE OF THE LATE OVERCOMERS

God's works are His acts, whereas God's ways are His governing principles. Moses knew God's ways, but the children of Israel knew only His acts (Psa. 103:7). God's ways are righteous in His principles and true in His promises. If you know God's ways, you do not need to wait to see His works. Although His works have not yet come, you know that they will come because you know the governing principles by which God does things. We have pointed out that God's ways are righteous according to God's principles. As these martyrs undergo suffering and persecution, they will know that God is righteous and that according to His governing principle of righteousness, He will intervene one day to judge Antichrist and to avenge their blood. Although this judgment has not yet come, the martyrs know God's principle and praise Him for His ways, for His governing principles in dealing with people. These principles are also true in God's promises. God promises His people that He will judge the evildoers, vindicate His way, and avenge the blood of His people. Because the overcomers know God's ways, they are assured that He will do what He has promised.

The late overcomers in Revelation 15 will be included among those who will live and reign with Christ a thousand year (20:4). Revelation 20:6 further indicates that the late overcomers will be with those who have "part in the first resurrection," those who "shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years." The late overcomers will be blessed and holy, and the second death will have no authority over them (20:6). They will be priests of God and of Christ and co-kings with Christ, reigning with Him over the nations in the coming kingdom.

In revelation 14 and 15 we see God's wisdom in dealing with various peoples and in caring for His people in different ways. The dead overcomers will be the man-child, the living overcomers will be the firstfruit, and those who are martyred during the great tribulation will be the late overcomers. Most of the believers who pass through the greater

part of the great tribulation will be included in the harvest. After the rapture of the harvest, the Lord will still need to gather the gleanings, those who ripen after the harvest and who need more sunshine to burn them into ripeness. Finally, we have seen that the Lord will gather the grapes, the evildoers, into the winepress at the end of the great tribulation and will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God. (Life-Study of Revelation, pp. 566-567)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the main purpose of rapture?
2. Please describe the two aspects of the rapture revealed in the Bible.
3. Describe the rapture of the man-child in Revelation 12:1-11.
4. Describe the rapture of the firstfruit in Revelation 14:1-5.
5. Describe the rapture of the harvest in Revelation 14:14-16.
6. Describe the rapture of the late overcomers in Revelation 15:2-4.

LESSON TWENTY-TWO

THE NEW JERUSALEM—THE ULTIMATE CONSUMMATION OF GOD'S ETERNAL ECONOMY

Scripture Reading:

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:6-7 And He said to me, They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be God to him, and he will be a son to Me.

Rev. 21:9-10 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

Rev. 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show to His slaves the things that must quickly take place; and He made it known by signs, sending it by His angel to His slave John.

Rev. 22:17 And 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.

Hymn: 978

OUTLINE

I. The New Jerusalem is the conclusion of the entire divine revelation and the central and ultimate consummated significance of the entire divine revelation—Rev. 21:2, 9-10:

A. The New Jerusalem is the conclusion and the total composition of the entire revelation of the Bible.

B. All the revelations and visions of the Scriptures consummate in the New Jerusalem.

II. The New Jerusalem is a sign—the greatest and ultimate sign in

Scripture, signifying the aggregate of the result of God's work of the new creation in all the dispensations within the old creation:

A. God's work in the dispensation of the patriarchs on the patriarchs.

B. God's work in the dispensation of the law on the children of Israel.

C. God's work in the dispensation of grace on the New Testament believers.

D. God's work in the dispensation of righteousness on the saved Israelites and on the rest of the New Testament believers not yet perfected.

III. The New Jerusalem is the ultimate goal of God's eternal economy:

A. God has only one ultimate goal—the New Jerusalem—to be God's enlargement, expansion and expression.

B. According to the entire revelation of the New Testament, the unique goal of the Christian work should be the New Jerusalem:

1. The New Jerusalem is the highest point of the apostles' living and working.

2. We must take the goal of God's eternal economy, the New Jerusalem, as our unique and the ultimate goal.

IV. The New Jerusalem is not a physical city, but an organic constitution.

V. The New Jerusalem, which is both the tabernacle and the temple, is a mutual dwelling place for the redeeming God and His redeemed—Rev. 21:2-3, 22:

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:3 And I heard a loud voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.

Rev. 21:22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

A. The tabernacle is God's redeemed, and the temple is the redeeming God:

1. The tabernacle is built mostly with the humanity of God's

redeemed to be God's dwelling place.

2. The temple is built mostly with the divinity to be the dwelling place of God's redeemed.

B. The New Jerusalem is the mingling of God with His redeemed, and this mingling is a mutual dwelling place.

C. The processed Triune God and His redeemed will be one mingled entity for eternity.

VI. The New Jerusalem is a universal couple—"a loving pair eternally"—the consummation of the divine romance—Rev. 22:17:

Rev. 21:17 And he measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

A. According to its humanity, the New Jerusalem is the human wife (with the divine life and nature) of the Lamb—Rev. 21:2, 9.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

B. According to its divinity, the New Jerusalem is the divine Husband (the redeeming God in His consummated embodiment, Christ, with His human life and nature) of God's redeemed elect.

C. Revelation 22:17 indicates that Christ and the New Jerusalem as His wife will be a universal couple for eternity.

VII. The New Jerusalem is the consummate incorporation of God and man:

A. The processed and consummated Triune God incorporate into an incorporation with His redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified elect—John 14:10, 20.

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.

John 14:20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

B. Union is related to life, mingling is related to nature, and

incorporation is related to person.

C. Incorporation has the aspects of being and doing:

1. In the aspect of being, God and man coinhere one another.

2. In the aspect of doing, God and man are completely one.

REFERENCE

The Holy Word for Morning Revival—The Crucial Content of God's New Testament Ministry (3); Week 12; Elders' training, Book 2, Ch. 5; The Application of the Interpretation of the New Jerusalem to the Seeking Believers, Ch. 1; The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 8, Ch. 257; Crystallization-Study of John, Ch. 14; God's New Testament Economy, Ch. 26; The Issue of Christ Being Glorified by the Father With the Divine Glory, Ch. 5.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE NEW JERUSALEM IS THE CONCLUSION OF THE ENTIRE DIVINE REVELATION AND THE CENTRAL AND ULTIMATE CONSUMMATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ENTIRE DIVINE REVELATION

The New Jerusalem is the ultimate consummation of the entire divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures. The conclusion of the sixty-six books of the Bible is contained in its last two chapters which are on the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the ultimate "coming out" of the sixty-six books. The sixty-six books of the Bible cover many many things which will consummate in one item—the New Jerusalem. Every positive thing in the Bible will have one outcome—the New Jerusalem. Some of us need to study the New Jerusalem to find out all the items of the divine revelation that can be seen there. (God's New Testament Economy, pp. 284-285)

THE NEW JERUSALEM SIGNIFYING THE AGGREGATE

OF THE RESULT OF GOD'S WORK OF THE NEW CREATION IN ALL THE DISPENSATIONS WITHIN THE OLD CREATION

In Revelation 1:1 we see that the divine revelation is given to Jesus Christ and that He makes it known by signs… the revelation in the book of Revelation is composed mainly of signs, that is, symbols with spiritual significance.

The New Jerusalem is a sign of the aggregate of the result of God's work of the new creation in all the dispensations within the old creation. There are four dispensations: the dispensation of the patriarchs, the dispensation of the law, the dispensation of grace, and the dispensation of righteousness.

In the dispensation of the patriarchs, God obtained the chosen patriarchs to be the first part of the new race in His new creation, signified by the crown of twelve stars worn on the head of the universal woman in Revelation 12, for the building of the New Jerusalem as God's expression in eternity future.

In the dispensation of the law, God obtained a group of people who are signified by the moon under the feet of the universal woman in Revelation 12, as the second part of the new race of the new creation, to constitute the New Jerusalem as God's eternal expression in the new heaven and new earth.

In the dispensation of grace, …God obtains all those who believe in Christ in the new testament as the third part and the majority of the new race in God's new creation, signified by the sun with which the universal woman in Revelation 12 is clothed, for the accomplishment of the constitution of the New Jerusalem to be God's ultimate and full expression in eternity.

In the dispensation of the kingdom, which is the dispensation of righteousness, God will cause the immature believers in the dispensation of grace to mature in life, and He will cause the repentant Israelites…to become constituents of the new race in His new creation…the people of the new race will be the constituents of the New Jerusalem in the new heaven

and new earth in eternity. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 8, pp. 2687 2694)

THE NEW JERUSALEM IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF GOD'S ETERNAL ECONOMY

According to the entire revelation of the New Testament, the unique goal of the Christian work should be the New Jerusalem, which is the ultimate goal of God's eternal economy… The degradation of the church is mainly due to the fact that nearly all Christian workers have been distracted to take many things other than the New Jerusalem as their goal. Hence, under the degradation of the church, to be overcomers answering the Lord's call we need to overcome not only the negative things but even more the positive things which replace the New Jerusalem as the goal. We do not want a kind of gospel preaching that is merely for soul-winning. The goal of our preaching the gospel must be the New Jerusalem. To be overcomers we should take the goal of God's eternal economy, the New Jerusalem, as our unique and ultimate goal. (The Holy Word for Morning Revival—The Crucial Content of God's New Testament Ministry (3), p. 193)

THE NEW JERUSALEM IS NOT A PHYSICAL CITY, BUT AN ORGANIC CONSTITUTION

We have seen that the book of Revelation was written in the way of signs. If you say that the last sign, the New Jerusalem, is a physical, real city, then what about the lampstands as the first sign in this book? Are the seven stars in chapter one real stars? And what about the Lamb? Do you believe Christ as the Lamb of God is an actual lamb with four legs and a little tail? Is the lion of the tribe of Judah a real lion like one at the zoo? It is not logical to interpret these signs in the book of revelation in this way. The New Jerusalem is a sign. It is not a genuine, real, physical city. The great Babylon is also a sign of the false church. The great Babylon and the New Jerusalem are two signs at the end of the book of Revelation. One city is a sign of the false church and the other city, the holy city, signifies the

ultimate consummation of the pure church. The great Babylon is called the great prostitute. The New Jerusalem is called the wife of the Lamb. Since Revelation is a book written with signs, the New Jerusalem could not be an exception; it must be a sign. (Elder's Training, pp. 58-59)

The New Jerusalem is a city, but this city is not literally physical. It is a sign, a figure, signifying an organic constitution. It is not something organized, but something constituted organically. The holy city is a constitution in life of the processed Triune God mingled with His regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite elect. It is an organic constitution of two parties: God and man. The first party is divine. The second party is human. (The Application of the Interpretation of the New Jerusalem to the Seeking Believers, p. 10)

The New Jerusalem, as a composition of all the regenerated saints of both the Old Testament and the New Testament dispensations built together with God as God's eternal building, will also be the mingling of all the redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite men with the processed, consummated Triune God. In the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, the Triune God has been processed and consummated to be one with men, His chosen people. And through the generations in God's dispensations, the tripartite men have been redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified to be one with the Triune God, who has chosen them in eternity past to be His counterpart, dwelling place, and expression in eternity future.

In addition to all these, the New Jerusalem will be the ultimate manifestation of the processed and consummated Triune God for His expression in the regenerated, transformed, and glorified humanity in eternity. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 8, pp. 2695)

We could not say that the New Jerusalem is a physical mansion or a physical city for God's redeemed people to lodge in because it is altogether not logical to say this. The New Jerusalem, the holy city, is a golden mountain (Rev. 21:16, 18). This mountain is twelve thousand stadia in three dimensions. The length, the breadth, and the height of the city are

twelve thousand stadia (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 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? (Elders' training, Book 2, p. 58)

THE NEW JERUSALEM IS BOTH THE TABERNACLE AND THE TEMPLE

The New Jerusalem has two natures, humanity and divinity. According to its humanity, the New Jerusalem is the tabernacle of God among men—the dwelling place of God in His humanity among men on the earth (Rev. 21:3)… The New Jerusalem is a human dwelling place because it is constituted with humanity. According to its divinity, the New Jerusalem is the temple of God as the dwelling place of His redeemed elect (Rev. 21:22). The holy city is the temple of God because it is divine. According to its humanity, it is a human tabernacle… According to its divinity, it is a divine temple. It is a human dwelling place, but the Dweller is God. How can God dwell in a human place? Because He became a man. In the same way, how can we humans dwell in God's temple? Because we have been made God (in life and nature but not in the Godhead). This is the mutual abiding of God and man. (The Application of the Interpretation of the New Jerusalem to the Seeking Believers, pp. 10-11)

THE NEW JERUSALEM IS THE UNIVERSAL COUPLE— THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE DIVINE ROMANCE

According to its humanity, the New Jerusalem is the human wife (with the divine life and nature) of the Lamb—the redeeming God (21:2, 9)… According to its divinity, it is the divine Husband (the redeeming God in His

consummated embodiment, Christ, with the human life and nature) of God's redeemed elect. The wife is human, and the Husband is divine. How can a human wife marry a divine Person? Because she has the divine Person's divine nature and life. How can the same entity also be a husband? Because the New Jerusalem is divine. The divine God is a part of its constituent. Therefore, on the one hand, it is a wife. On the other hand, it is a husband. The New Jerusalem is the wife according to its humanity and the husband according to its divinity. But as the divine Husband, the New Jerusalem has the human life and nature. In its humanity and in its divinity it is both a mutual abode and a couple, a wife and a husband. (p. 11)

THE NEW JERUSALEM IS THE CONSUMMATE INCORPORATION OF GOD AND MAN

In our ministry we have used three words to describe the believers' relationship with the Triune God: union, mingling, and incorporation. Union is concerning our oneness in life with the Lord. Mingling is related to the divine and human natures. The Lord has gone further to show us that our relationship with Him is not only one of union and mingling but also one of incorporation.

Union and mingling refer to our relationship with the Lord in our life and nature but not in our person. Humanly speaking, no person can be in another person. But in the divine and mystical realm, the consummated God and the regenerated believers, the persons, indwell one another. This is an incorporation. In this universal, divine-human incorporation, persons indwell one another, that is, they coinhere.

The word incorporation also indicates that these persons are incorporated together to carry out their purpose, that is, to carry out God's economy… The goal of God's economy is the enlarged, universal, divine-human incorporation of the consummated God with the regenerated believers… All of the believers will eventually be incorporated into this one great incorporation. The final consummation of this one great incorporation is the New Jerusalem. (The Issue of Christ Being Glorified by

the Father With the Divine Glory, p. 40-44)

QUESTIONS

1. The New Jerusalem signifies the aggregate of the result of God's work in the new creation in many ages. In which ages?

2. Is the New Jerusalem a physical city or an organic constitution? Please explain.

3. Why is the New Jerusalem a mutual dwelling place of the redeeming God and His redeemed?

4. Why is the New Jerusalem the completion of the divine romance of the universal couple?

LESSON TWENTY-THREE

THE THREE MAIN ASPECTS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Scripture Reading:

Rev. 21:18b …and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

Rev. 21:21b …And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Rev. 22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

Rev. 23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Rev. 24a And the nations will walk by its light…

Rev. 22:6-7 And he said to me, These words are faithful and true; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show to His slaves the things which must quickly take place. And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this scroll.

Hymn: 971

OUTLINE

I. The structure of the New Jerusalem:

A. The base of pure gold—Rev. 21:18b, 21b:

1. The base is pure gold signifying the divine nature of God as the base for its building—Rev. 21:18b.

2. It is the solid foundation of its throne in the city, for the divine administration—Rev. 22:1b.

B. The gates of pearl—Rev. 21:12b-13, 21a:

Rev. 21:12b …It had a great and high wall and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel:

Rev. 21:13 On the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

Rev. 21:21a And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl…

1. Signifying the issue of secretion of Christ's redeeming and life-releasing death and His life-dispensing resurrection.

2. Requiring the seeking believers' daily experience of the death and resurrection of Christ—Phil. 3:10, 1:19; Rom. 8:28.

Phil. 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

Phil. 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Rom. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

3. Established by Christ through His death and resurrection.

4. The reopened way to partake of the tree of life being universally available to the four directions of the earth.

C. The wall of jasper and the foundations of precious stones—Rev. 21:12a, 14, 17-20:

Rev. 21:12a It had a great and high wall…

Rev. 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Rev. 21:17 And he measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

Rev. 21:18 And the building work of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

Rev. 21:19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;

Rev. 21:20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

1. Typifying the believers in Christ, who are signified by the precious stone, completed by the transforming and building work of God the Spirit.

2. Separating this organic building, the New Jerusalem, from the surrounding nations and protecting the interest of God.

3. The colors of the twelve foundations having the appearance of a

rainbow, signifying that the holy city is built upon God's faithfulness in keeping His covenant.

4. The names of twelve apostles being on the twelve foundations, indicating that the holy city is built according to the teachings of the apostles in the New Testament.

II. The furnishings of the New Jerusalem—its throne, its temple and its light—Rev. 22:1, 21:22-24a:

Rev. 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more.

Rev. 21:22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

Rev. 21:23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Rev. 21:24a And the nations will walk by its light.

A. The center of the divine glory of the New Jerusalem being the throne of God and of the Lamb (the redeeming Triune God).

B. The temple of the New Jerusalem is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb (the redeeming God), as the palace of the divine family.

C. The light of the New Jerusalem is unique eternal divine light with God as the glory and the Lamb as the lamp.

III. The supply of the New Jerusalem being the processed and consummated Triune God—Rev. 22:1-2:

Rev. 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

Rev. 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

A. Proceeding out of the throne of God—the administration of the divine authority—based on the golden base.

B. Flowing out of the river of water of life as the supply of the drink to quench the thirst of the Holy City.

C. On the two sides of the river was the tree of life, as main element for the life supply to nourish to entire city.

REFERENCE

The Application of the Interpretation of the New Jerusalem to the Seeking Believers, Chs. 1-5.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE STRUCTURE OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

The Base of Pure Gold

The base of the New Jerusalem is pure gold, signifying the divine nature of God as the base for its building (21:18b). The New Jerusalem is a golden mountain. Because we are the constituents of this New Jerusalem, we must be gold. We were made of dust, but when we received Christ as our life, we were regenerated into gold. In regeneration we received the divine life, the golden life. …In the old creation, represented by Adam, we were dusty men, but when we were regenerated, we became golden men.

The base of the New Jerusalem is the solid foundation of the divine throne for the divine administration (22:1b). The river of water of life, signifying the Spirit, proceeds from this administration in the middle of the New Jerusalem's street as the supply to the entire city (v. 1a). In the river grows the tree of life, signifying Christ, as the main supply to the entire city through the river (v. 2). The divine and human communication, signified by the street, proceeds from this glorious center to reach all twelve gates of the city, in order to bring the entire city into the submission to the one divine administration and to blend the entire city into the oneness of the one divinity-mingled-with-humanity communication, fellowship (21:21b). (The Application of the Interpretation of the New Jerusalem to the Seeking Believers, p. 12)

All of our fellowship should be according to God's golden nature. The river is in the middle of the street, and the street is golden nature. In this fellowship is the river, the Holy Spirit, as our beverage and our supply to quench our thirst. Then we also have Christ as the tree of life for our life supply to nourish us. In order to experience all of this, we must be on the

golden street, the base of gold. We may feel that it is enough to say that our fellowship with God is our contacting God, and our fellowship with the saints is our contacting the saints. But this is not the deciding factor concerning whether or not our fellowship is the fellowship of God. The fellowship of God must be based upon God's divine nature. I may go to visit a certain brother every day, but is that the real fellowship? Whether that is the real fellowship or not is determined by whether or not it is based upon the golden nature within me. If my contact with a brother is not based upon the golden nature, then I am making a natural friendship with him. I am not practicing the spiritual fellowship of life based upon God's divine nature. (p. 14)

The Gates of Pearl

The gates of the New Jerusalem are pearls (Rev. 21:21a). Its twelve gates are twelve big pearls. It is impossible for natural pearls to be so big that they can be the gates of the city. The pearl in the city is not a natural pearl but is used by God as a sign.

When an oyster is wounded by a grain of sand, it secretes its life-juice around the grain of sand and makes it into a precious pearl. Pearls signify the issue of Christ's secretion in two aspects: His redeeming and life-releasing death and His life-dispensing resurrection. Without God's revelation we can never realize that the death of Christ secretes, dispenses, to produce the gates of the city. The twelve gates are the issue of Christ's secretion also in His life-dispensing resurrection. He resurrected to be the life-giving Spirit to dispense the divine life into the believers (1 Cor. 15:45b). This is a kind of secretion issuing in a big pearl to be the gates of the city. Both Christ's death and resurrection have an issue, a secretion. (pp. 19-20)

This entry reopens the way for the seekers to contact Christ as the tree of life. This reopened way to partake of the tree of life by entering into the New Jerusalem is universally available to the four directions of the earth with three gates on each of the four sides of the holy city, signifying that the

processed and consummated Triune God is willingly open to receive the repentant sinners into the ultimate consummation of His eternal economy. We all have to learn to speak this kind of divine language. Such an entry today is available to all the people on this earth in four directions: east, north, south, and west. This is signified by the twelve gates. Three gates are on each of the four sides. The three gates signify the processed Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. (p.24)

The Wall Of Jasper
And The Foundations Of Precious Stones

Revelation 21 shows that the wall of the city and its foundations are precious stones (vv. 18a, 19-20). We, the believers in Christ, were created by God with dust (Gen. 2:7). Through our regeneration by the Spirit we became stones (John 1:42). …By our growth in the divine life in Christ as the living stone (1 Pet. 2:4), we are transformed into precious stones (1 Cor. 3:12a).

This transformation takes place by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). With Christ there is His death and resurrection. With the Spirit there is transformation. God is triune and His intention is to work Himself into us as the gold to be the base. In other words, He works Himself into us to make us divine, golden. But how can God work Himself into us? He does this by Christ's redemption and resurrection and also by the Spirit's transformation. The Father's golden nature is the base. The Son's redemption and resurrection are the steps to work the Triune God into us. Christ died on the cross with the intention of working the Father into His believers as the golden base. Then in resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit to carry out the work of transformation. (pp. 30)

The holy city's wall and its foundations … the first function is to separate, to sanctify, the city unto God from all things other than God, thus making the city the holy city (21:2a, 10b). …The second function of the wall of the holy city with its foundations is to protect the interest of the riches of God's divinity on the earth and the attainments of His consummation. What are

the riches of God's divinity, which need to be protected? Today God's divinity has been mocked. Some say that it is a heresy to believe that we are born of God to be His children and that we are God's family and have become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. To oppose this great truth is to mock the interest of the riches of God's divinity on the earth.

[Another] function of the wall with its foundation is to guarantee God's unfailing faithfulness for eternal security. The New Jerusalem standing upon the twelve layers of its foundations in the colors of the rainbow guarantees God's faithfulness. (pp. 32-35)

The New Jerusalem is nothing else but God Himself wrought into us to be this structure. This structure is mainly of three parts: its base, its gates, and its wall with all the foundations. These are the three Persons of the Divine Trinity. The gold as the base of the city is God the Father; the pearls as the gates of the city are God the Son; and the wall of the city is God the Spirit. The Father as the base, the Son as the gates, and the Spirit as the wall are the Triune God wrought into His chosen people to have such a structure standing in the universe marvelously and uniquely. The New Jerusalem is the Triune God, the Divine Trinity, as three basic factors, wrought into and structured together with His redeemed as the conclusion of the whole Bible. I hope that many of us in the Lord's recovery would go around the globe telling people everywhere nothing else but the New Jerusalem. All of Christianity needs to hear this. Thank the Lord that we have seen the New Jerusalem as the unique conclusion of the entire holy Word. (p. 41)

THE FURNISHINGS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM— ITS THRONE, ITS TEMPLE AND ITS LIGHT

The three furnishings of the New Jerusalem are the throne as the center, the temple as the palace to hold the many kings who will be the reign in the new heaven and new earth, and the lamp with God as the shining light in which all can live and move. Now let us consider how to apply these

furnishings. First, we have to apply the throne of God with its administration to our daily life. Every day you have to realize that you are a person who is under the divine throne and who is also in the divine administration. … With this realization you cannot be loose and uncontrolled.

Also, you have to remember that you are a member of the royal family. You are one of many kings of the kingly family. Even when you are at a restaurant, you should remember that you are a king eating there. …If you consider that you are a king, you would not act lightly, talk loosely, or behave meanly.

We also have God in Christ as our light. Our natural knowledge, our natural ability in understanding and realizing things, is like the light of the sun and the moon. Furthermore, we have received many "lamps" from the teachers in high schools and universities. These are the artificial "lamps." In the church life, we do not need our understanding by our natural ability or our school-taught knowledge. Instead, we have our God shining within us through His word.

We do not need the natural and the artificial light. For the building up of the Body of Christ, we walk and live under the divine, redeeming, and shining light through the word of God. (pp. 46-47)

THE SUPPLY OF THE NEW JERUSALEM— THE PROCESSED AND ULTIMATE CONSUMMATION TRIUNE GOD

The supply of the holy city is the processed and consummated Triune God. (Rev. 22:1-20). …The tree of life is for our nourishment, and the river of water of life is for our beverage. The supply Christ affords is for our nourishment and the water the Spirit brings to us is for our supply to satisfy us and quench our thirst. But to nourish and to satisfy are not the final goal. Christ nourishes us and the Spirit quenches our thirst for our growth in the divine life, and the growth of the divine life is for the building up of the city as the organic constitution of the processed Triune God

mingled with His regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite elect. (p. 53-54)

THE NEW JERUSALEM HAS A THREEFOLD STRESS WITH THE DIVINE TRINITY IN THE THREE MAIN ASPECTS

The New Jerusalem is an organic constitution of the processed and consummated Triune God with His regenerated, transformed, and glorified elect. It has a threefold stress with the Divine Trinity in the three main aspects of this organic constitution:

1. The first main aspect in its structure with its base signified by the gold as the Father's nature, its gates signified by the pearls as the issue of the Son's redeeming death and life-dispensing resurrection, and its wall signified by the precious stones as the consummation of the Spirit's transforming work.

2. The second main aspect in its furnishing with the reigning center of the Father signified by the throne, the abiding place of the Son signified by the temple, and the enlightening and shining light of the Spirit signified by the oil in the lamp.

3. The third main aspect in its supply being the flow of the Divine Trinity; its base and source for the flow is the Father signified by the street, its flow is the Spirit signified by the river of the water of life, and the element of its flow is the Son signified by the tree of life.

The entire constitution of the New Jerusalem is the processed and consummated Triune God built with His regenerated, transformed, and glorified elect in His Divine Trinity in a threefold way. It is impossible for such a constitution to be anything physical; it has to be the Divine Trinity in His threefold blending with His redeemed elect. May we receive the eternal mercy and the sufficient grace of the unlimited Christ that we could live a life as a foretaste of such an organic constitution in this age for its full taste in eternity. (pp. 55-56)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly the structure of the New Jerusalem.

2. Describe briefly the furnishings of the New Jerusalem.

3. What is the supply of the New Jerusalem?

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR

BECOMING THE NEW JERUSALEM

Scripture Reading:

Rom. 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled.

Rev. 22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city.

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

Rom. 8:28-29 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. Our becoming the New Jerusalem is our entering in the New Jerusalem.

II. The New Jerusalem is the embodiment of God's complete salvation with its judicial and organic aspects—Rom. 5:10; Rev. 22:14:

A. God's complete salvation is a composition of God's righteousness as the base and God's life as the consummation—Rom. 5:18.

Rom. 5:18 So then as it was through one offense unto condemnation to all men, so also it was through one righteous act unto justification of life to all men.

B. The entire New Jerusalem is a matter of life built on the foundation of righteousness—Rev. 21:14, 19-20; cf. Gen. 9:8-17; Psa. 89:14.

Rev. 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Rev. 21:19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;

Rev. 21:20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

Gen. 9:8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying,

Gen. 9:9 And I Myself now establish My covenant with you and with your seed after you

Gen. 9:10 And with every living animal that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every animal of the earth with you, of all that came out of the ark, every animal of the earth.

Gen. 9:11 And I establish My covenant with you, that never again will all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.

Gen. 9:12 And God said, This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living animal that is with you, for perpetual generations:

Gen. 9:13 I set My bow in the clouds, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.

Gen. 9:14 And when I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow is seen in the clouds,

Gen. 9:15 I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living animal of all flesh, and never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Gen. 9:16 And the bow will be in the clouds, and I will look upon it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living animal of all flesh that is upon the earth.

Gen. 9:17 And God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

Psa. 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before Your face.

C. In the New Jerusalem, Christ will still be the redeeming Lamb—Rev. 22:1.

Rev. 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

D. In His organic salvation God proceeds step by step to save us in the divine life so that we may be filled with this life in our entire being to become the city of life—Rom. 8:6, 10-11; Rev. 22:1-2.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Rom. 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit

is life because of righteousness.

Rom. 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

Rev. 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

Rev. 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

III. God's judicial redemption of forgiveness of sins, washing away of sins, justification by God, reconciliation to God and positional sanctification unto the Lord is to prepare the God-men to live the organic salvation of God for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy—Rom. 5:10.

Rom. 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled.

IV. The process of God's organic salvation is God's move to deify man, making man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead:

A. The key of God's organic salvation is the Spirit with our spirit—Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17.

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

1 Cor. 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

B. We are saved organically to become the New Jerusalem by exercising our spirit to enjoy the Triune God—1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; Jude 19-21:

1 Tim. 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.

2 Tim. 1:6 For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Tim. 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.

Jude 19 These are those who make divisions, soulish, having no spirit.

Jude 20 But you, beloved, building up yourselves upon your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.

Jude 21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

1. We need to enjoy God the Father as the light of life—Rev. 21:23, 11, 22:5.

Rev. 21:23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Rev. 21:11 Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

Rev. 22:5 And night will be no more; and they have no need of the light of a lamp and of the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine upon them; and they will reign forever and ever.

2. We need to enjoy God the Son as the tree of life—Rev. 22:2; Gen. 2:7-9.

Rev. 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Gen. 2:7 Jehovah God formed man with the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

Gen. 2:8 And Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there He put the man whom He had formed.

Gen. 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

3. We need to enjoy God the Spirit as the river of life—Rev. 22:1.

Rev. 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

C. As we experience each section of God's organic salvation, we go up level by level until we become the beings in the New Jerusalem:

1. We are regenerated by participating in God's life to become God's species, God's children, for God's sonship—John 1:12-13; Rev. 21:7, 22:14b.

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name,

John 1:13 Who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Rev. 21:7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be God to him, and he will be a son to Me.

Rev. 22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city.

2. We are sanctified by participating in God's nature to become as holy as the holy city—1 Thes. 5:23; Eph. 5:26.

1 Thes. 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph. 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word.

3. We are renewed by participating in God's mind to become as new as the New Jerusalem—2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:23.

2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

Eph. 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind

4. We are transformed by participating in God's being to be constituted with the Triune God as gold, silver (the pearl), and the precious stones—1 Cor. 3:12; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2; Rev. 21:18-21.

1 Cor. 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

Rev. 21:18 And the building work of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

Rev. 21:19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;

Rev. 21:20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

Rev. 21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

5. We are conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God by participating in God's image to have the appearance of the New Jerusalem—Rom. 8:28-29; Rev. 21:11, 4:3.

Rom. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love

God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

Rev. 21:11 Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

Rev. 4:3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance, and there was a rainbow around the throne like an emerald in appearance.

6. We are glorified by participating in God's glory and to be completely permeated with the glory of the New Jerusalem—Rom. 8:21; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 21:11.

Rom. 8:21 In hope that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Phil. 3:21 Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself.

Rev. 21:11 Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

REFERENCE

The Holy Word for Morning Revival—The New Revival—Becoming the New Jerusalem; Crystallization-Study of John, Chs. 15-16; Crystallization-Study of the Complete Salvation of God in Romans, Ch. 1; Life-Study of Isaiah, Ch. 47; The Organic Aspect of God's Salvation, Chs. 1, 5; The Divine and Mystical Realm, Ch. 4; The Holy Word for Morning Revival—The Highest Point of the Living and Work of the Apostles; The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ Life, Ch. 3.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

OUR BECOMING THE NEW JERUSALEM IS OUR ENTERING IN THE NEW JERUSALEM

In John 4:14b the Lord said, “The water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water gushing up [springing up] into eternal life.” God the Father is the fountain emerging in God the Son as a spring gushing up to be a river, signifying God the Spirit. The Triune God flows into eternal life, and the eternal life has its totality. Our human life also has its totality. A living person is the totality of the human life. The totality of the divine life is the New Jerusalem, which is the destination of the flowing Triune God.

The writings of John cover the span from God to the New Jerusalem. Eventually, the triune, eternal God becomes the New Jerusalem incorporated with all of us. We do not enter into the New Jerusalem; we become the New Jerusalem. Our becoming is our entering in. (Crystallization-Study of John, p. 148)

THE NEW JERUSALEM IS THE EMBODIMENT OF GOD’S COMPLETE SALVATION WITH ITS JUDICIAL AND ORGANIC ASPECTS

Romans 5:10 points out that God’s full salvation revealed in this book consists of two sections: one section is the redemption accomplished for us by Christ’s death, and the other section is the saving afforded us by Christ’s life. The first four chapters of this book discourse comprehensively regarding the redemption accomplished by Christ’s death, whereas the last twelve chapters speak in detail concerning the salvation afforded by Christ’s life. Before 5:11, Paul shows us that we are saved because we have been redeemed, justified, and reconciled to God. However, we have not yet been saved to the extent of being sanctified, transformed, and conformed to the image of God’s Son. Redemption, justification, and reconciliation, which are accomplished outside of us by the death of Christ, redeem us objectively. Objective redemption redeems us positionally from condemnation and eternal punishment; subjective salvation saves us dispositionally from our old man, our self, and our natural life. (Crystallization-Study of the Complete Salvation of God in Romans, pp. 13-14)

The sixty-six books of the entire Bible reveal many things to us. When all these things are embodied together as one entity, that is the New Jerusalem. …On the one hand, we may say that the Bible unveils to us the central line of the divine revelation, which is God's economy and God's dispensing. On the other hand, we may say in brief that the totality of what the Bible reveals to us is the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the total composition of the entire revelation of the Bible.

The foundation of the New Jerusalem consists of twelve layers of precious stones (Rev. 21:14, 19-20). Some fundamental books written on the foundation of the New Jerusalem have pointed out that the colors of the twelve layers of precious stones in the foundation of the New Jerusalem look like a rainbow. According to Genesis 9:8-17, the rainbow is a sign that reminds us of God's faithfulness in keeping His word. God's faithfulness is based on His righteousness. If there were no righteousness, there would be no faithfulness. Thus, the foundation of the New Jerusalem is the righteousness of God with God's faithfulness.

Within the New Jerusalem there is a river of life, which flows, or spirals, from the top of the city to the bottom, to reach all the twelve gates (Rev. 22:1). That flowing of the river of life saturates the entire city. On the two sides of the river the tree of life grows. Thus, the content of the New Jerusalem is life. Within the city the river of life flows and the tree of life grows as a vine along the two banks of the river, to supply the entire city. This indicates that the entire New Jerusalem is a matter of life built on the foundation of righteousness. Life is the consummation of righteousness, and righteousness is the base, the foundation, of life.

In the New Jerusalem, life issues from light. According to Revelation 21:23, in the New Jerusalem there is no need of the shining of the sun or the moon, for the glory of God illumines it, and its lamp is the Lamb. This means that Christ is the lamp, and the very God embodied in Christ is the light. Hence, in the foundation of the New Jerusalem we can see faithfulness based upon righteousness. We can also see that the light in the New Jerusalem issues in life. Thus, the New Jerusalem is the embodiment of

God's full salvation, and God's full salvation is a composition of God's righteousness as the base and God's life as the consummation. This is the revelation of the Bible. (Life-Study of Isaiah, pp. 348-349)

THE JUDICIAL ASPECT OF GOD'S SALVATION

We need to be clear that the complete salvation of God is of two aspects: the judicial aspect and the organic aspect. The judicial aspect is according to the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:17a; 3:21-26; 9:30-31) as the procedure of God's salvation to satisfy the requirements of God's righteous law on the sinners. It is for sinners to be forgiven before God (Luke 24:47), washed (Heb. 1:3), justified (Rom. 3:24-25), reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10a), and sanctified unto God positionally (1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 13:12), thereby entering into the grace of God for the accomplishment of the purpose of God's salvation. However, redemption as the judicial aspect cannot carry out the purpose of God's salvation, because it is merely the procedure, not the purpose. For example, a cook spends a great amount of time cooking in the kitchen to prepare a feast. However, the cooking is not his purpose but merely a procedure. Later when the guests are invited to enjoy the feast, that is the purpose of the cooking. Likewise, in the salvation of God we should not remain in the aspect of procedure, the judicial aspect; rather, we should go on to the aspect of purpose, the organic aspect.

THE ORGANIC ASPECT OF GOD'S SALVATION

The organic aspect of God's salvation is through the life of God (Rom. 1:17b; Acts 11:18; Rom. 5:10b, 17b, 18b, 21b). Whereas the judicial aspect is according to the righteousness of God to accomplish God's redemption, the organic aspect is through the life of God to carry out God's salvation, including regeneration, shepherding, dispositional sanctification, renewing, transformation, building up, conformation, and glorification. This is the purpose of God's salvation to accomplish all that God wants to achieve in the believers in His economy through His divine life. (The Organic Aspect of God's Salvation, pp. 15-16)

[We want to] see that the key of God's organic salvation is the Spirit Himself with our spirit. We should not forget that there is such a marvelous phrase in the Bible in Romans 8:16. Even after we enter into the New Jerusalem, I would like to see a banner there saying—"The Spirit Himself with our spirit." The Spirit Himself with our spirit is doing one thing: witnessing that we are the children of God. Just to say the people of God is too critical, but to say the children of God is so great.

The Spirit Himself is the witnessing One, and this Spirit is the Spirit of life, the Spirit who gives life, the Spirit who is the Spirit of Christ. This Spirit is also the pneumatic Christ and the indwelling Spirit. Our spirit was created by God but became dead through the fall. But later it was regenerated by God. Not only so, after regeneration the regenerating Spirit remains in our regenerated spirit and mingles Himself with our spirit to make the two one. First Corinthians 6:17 says, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." (The Divine and Mystical Realm, p. 53)

God's organic work is from regeneration to glorification, from God's entering into man to man's practically being brought into God. Regeneration is God entering into man, whereas glorification is man entering into God. Thus, man is altogether mingled and joined with God to express the image of God. That is glorification. The ultimate consummation of God's complete salvation is the New Jerusalem—the crystallization of the union and mingling of God with man, the processed and consummated Triune God with His regenerated, transformed, conformed, and glorified tripartite elect. (The Organic Aspect of God's Salvation, p. 74)

We should do only one work, which is to make God's chosen people regenerated ones, sanctified ones, renewed ones—the new man—transformed ones, conformed ones—those conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God—and glorified ones. All those who will be in the New Jerusalem are this kind of people.

Specifically, God proceeds step by step to make a chosen one of God a person who is regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God, and even glorified by God. In this way,

we go up level by level until we reach the highest point, where we become the same. There is no more flesh and no more natural being. All are in the Spirit. All are the kingdom of the heavens, and all are beings in the New Jerusalem. This is the highest point. (The Holy Word for Morning Revival—The Highest Point of the Living and Work of the Apostles, p. 64)

God glorifies us that we may arrive at the consummation of the possession of His divine image. Furthermore, He glorifies us that we may not only be built up, established, shaped, and solidified in the experience of God's organic salvation, but also arrive at the consummation of such experience. In God's organic salvation His glorifying work in us begins with His regenerating us with His life of glory.

After regenerating us, God continues, step by step, with His work of renewing, sanctification, transformation, and conformation to transfuse us with Himself as glory until the glory of His life saturates our being and is manifested in our body; thus His work of glorification in us reaches its consummation. Our glorification is the top portion of our divine sonship in God's organic salvation (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:23). God's economy is that we may become sons of God to inherit all His riches. The day is coming when our body will be redeemed and we will enter into the top and full enjoyment of the divine sonship.

The consummation of God's organic salvation is the New Jerusalem—the universal incorporation of the union and mingling of divinity with humanity—the processed and consummated Triune God incorporated with His regenerated, renewed, sanctified, transformed, conformed, and glorified tripartite elect.

Dear brothers and sisters, our future is the Lord's coming back. We are not here miserably longing for His return so that our afflictions may be over quickly and we may be released from the bondage of slavery. Rather, we are awaiting the Lord's coming back by daily experiencing His organic salvation. We are waiting not by sitting passively but by being saved actively day by day. We cannot remain in the stage of regeneration; rather, we must cooperate with the Lord for Him to renew, sanctify, transform,

conform, and glorify us so that God's organic salvation may be accomplished in us for the fulfillment of His eternal economy. (The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ Life, pp. 40-41)

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the New Jerusalem the practical expression of God's full salvation?

2. How can we become the New Jerusalem?

SERIES IV

THE PRACTICE OF THE NEW WAY

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LESSON ONE

THE VISION OF SERVICE

Scripture Reading:

Exo. 21:5 But if the servant plainly says, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free.

Rom. 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

Eph. 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

Hymn: Let me love and not be requited (The Way of the Cross—The Way of Following the Lord)

OUTLINE

I. The motive of serving the Lord:

A. The love toward the Lord—Exo. 21:5.

B. God's compassion—Rom. 12:1.

II. The meaning of serving the Lord:

A. To be a slave of the Lord—1 Cor. 7:22.

1 Cor. 7:22 For the slave who has been called in the Lord is the Lord's freedman; likewise the free man who has been called is Christ's slave.

B. To be a priest of God—Rom. 15:16; Acts 13:2.

Rom. 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting….

C. To be the members of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:18.

1 Cor. 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.

III. The purpose of serving the Lord—Building up the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:16:

Eph. 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

IV. How to serve the Lord:

A. Serving with our whole being—Rom. 12:1-2, 11.

Rom. 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

Rom. 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.

B. Following the Lord—John 12:26.

John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

C. According to the counsel of God—Acts 13:36.

Acts 13:36 Now David, having served his own generation by the counsel of God, did indeed fall asleep and was buried with his fathers and saw corruption.

D. An ear to hear—Exo. 21:6.

Exo. 21:6 Then his master shall bring him to God and shall bring him to the door or to the doorpost, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

E. Coming near to the Lord, seeking Him, and serving Him in prayer—Ezek. 44:15b; Acts 13:2.

Ezek. 44:15b …They shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to present to Me the fat and the blood…

Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

F. Coordinating in the Body—1 Cor. 12:14-21.

1 Cor. 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.

1 Cor. 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.

1 Cor. 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.

1 Cor. 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?

1 Cor. 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.

1 Cor. 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?

1 Cor. 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.

1 Cor. 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

V. The reward of serving the Lord:

A. The honor of God the Father—John 12:26.

John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

B. Being blessed to recline at table and enjoying the serving of the Lord—Luke 12:37.

Luke 12:37 Blessed are those slaves whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Truly I tell you that he will gird himself and will have them recline at table, and he will come to them and serve them.

C. Ruling with the Lord and enjoying the joy of the master—Matt. 25:21, 23.

Matt.25:21 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

Matt. 25:23 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

REFERENCE

Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 3, Ch. 29; Messages Given to the Working Saints, Ch. 8; Life Lessons, Vol. 2, Lsn. 23.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE MOTIVE OF SERVING THE LORD

The Love toward the Lord

A saved person does not serve the Lord because of outward encouragement or pressure from man. Nor does he serve the Lord because someone stands beside him exhorting or leading him. He serves the Lord out of an inward motive. This motive is love for the Lord. His love for the Lord inwardly forces him to serve the Lord. It urges him to serve the Lord. His inward love for the Lord makes him unable to not serve the Lord. He loves the Lord so he must serve the Lord. This is typified by the example in the Old Testament of the slave who loved his master. Even though that kind of slave could be freed and did not need to continue as a slave, because he loved his master, he did not want to go out free. He willingly remained a slave serving the master he loved. This is our motive in serving the Lord. We also become the Lord's servants and serve Him willingly because of our love for the Lord. Our service to the Lord is out of our inward love for the Lord.

The Compassions of God

We love the Lord because He loves us. The Lord's love moves us and encourages us to love Him. The Lord's love to us produces our love toward Him within us. It makes us unable to not love Him. Therefore the Lord's love causes us to love Him and serve Him. For this reason, the apostle exhorts us through the compassions of God to present our bodies a living sacrifice as service to God. The compassions of God, the love of God encourage us to love Him and serve Him. We serve Him because we are encouraged by His love. It is out of a love which His love stirs up inside us. This love is our motive in serving Him. It makes it impossible for us not to serve Him. (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 3, Ch. 29)

THE MEANING OF SERVING THE LORD

According to the Bible, Christians should not make a profession out of preaching, but should serve the Lord as their main career. Any job or career that we Christians have is a second job. Our main occupation is serving the Lord. To us any job or occupation is secondary. Serving the Lord comes first. Our goal for living on the earth is to serve the Lord. We should make serving the Lord the center and goal of our lives. The only reason we have a job or career is to have something at hand to make a living and to supply the needs of the Lord's work. At the same time, we contact people through our jobs and careers to preach the Lord's gospel to them. Thus, we should not consider any profession or job as our main occupation or the most important thing and put serving the Lord in second place. It does not matter what we do for a living, it all should be something at hand. Our goal should be to serve the Lord and preach the gospel. It does not matter if we are doctors, teachers, businessmen or laborers. Whatever job or profession we have should be for serving the Lord and preaching the gospel. Doctors should serve the Lord and preach the gospel while they are practicing medicine. Teachers should serve the Lord and preach the gospel while teaching. Whatever our profession, we should serve the Lord and preach the gospel through what we do. Each one of us should consider serving the Lord and preaching the gospel as our primary occupation and our jobs and careers as secondary occupations. If we are normal Christians, we must be this way. This is the only way to live to the Lord and serve Him. (Ch. 29)

"...Likewise the free man who has been called is Christ's slave." (1 Cor. 7:22). To serve the lord is to be slave of the Lord Christ. In this verse, a slave refers to one who is sold and who has lost his freedom. Such a status reveals the significance of serving the Lord. Our serving the Lord is not to do any great work, but to be a slave of Christ to serve the Lord Thus, in Romans 12:11m the verb used to describe one who serves the Lord is simply the verb form of the word slave and should be translated "serving as a slave."

"And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting..." (Acts 13:2). Ministering here literally refers to service as a priest; it is the same word as in Hebrews 10:11 for the "ministering" (serving) of a priest. To serve God as a priest is to handle before God all things related to the worship of God. This requires us to constantly draw near to God and stand before Him.

"But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed." (1 Cor. 12:18). We believers are all members placed by God in the Body of Christ, and each member has its function. When we fulfill our office to minister in the Body of Christ according to our function, we are also serving the Lord. (Life Lessons, Vol. 2, pp. 169-170)

THE PURPOSE OF SERVING THE LORD— THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

(Our purpose of serving the Lord) is the building up of the Body of Christ. This is very important. This matter cannot be realized in the meetings of Christianity. It can only be realized in the practice of the new way. In the new way, no one is monopolizing. Everyone has a chance. Nothing is according to arrangement. Everything is by the organic way and follows the leading of the spirit. For example, according to your plan, you may have every Friday set aside for going out. But this Monday, while you are praying and contacting the Lord, He may give you a leading to visit your cousin that very evening. This is to be organic. We should not have dead services that come from arrangements. Rather, we should have living services that come from being organic. We should bypass arrangements and serve and act organically. Christianity talks about organization and arrangements. But the new way requires that we serve organically. All the brothers and sisters should be led by the Lord daily. In this way, everyone will be built up organically. We will not be building up an organized congregation, but we will be building up the Body of Christ. Moreover, we should not emphasize work, but should pay attention to supplying Christ, life, and the spirit. Most Christianity activities emphasize work. But we have to learn not to emphasize work. Rather we should emphasize the supplying of Christ, life and the spirit. For example, a brother may come to fellowship with you. He may mention to you his family problems, that his wife is giving him a hard time. You should not exhort him to be patient, forbearing, or yielding. This is not Christ. You can share with him a testimony, or help him to read some verses. You may say something like this to him: "Brother, today, the Lord Jesus is in you. He is a living Lord, and He is with you all the time. You need to contact Him in the morning. When you see your wife losing her temper, you should begin to fellowship

with the Lord within to receive His supply. We all need the filling of the Spirit. We have no way to overcome our problems. But when the Spirit fills us, nothing else will matter anymore." When you fellowship with him this way, you are supplying Christ to him. You are also supplying the Spirit to him. By this, he will grow in life.

As a further step, in order to help others learn to serve and work in an organic way, we have to grow together with the saints in the life of Christ, being fitted and knit together to be built up into the Body of Christ. This is based upon the words of Ephesians chapter four. We are not merely coming together for a meeting or to build up a congregation, but are growing together into the Body of Christ. This is the building up of His Body. We should boast only in the gaining, perfecting, helping and building up of people. By this the all-inclusive Christ will have an unlimited and unceasing increase and spread. (Messages Given to the Working Saints, pp. 91-92)

HOW TO SERVE THE LORD

Our entire being is of three parts: spirit, soul, and body. To serve the Lord with our whole being means that the spirit, soul, and body all participate in the service to the Lord. First, we must present our bodies to the Lord; second, the mind, the main part of our soul, must be renewed and transformed; third, our spirit must be burning. Thus, all three parts of our being participate in serving the Lord. (Life Lessons, p. 171)

To serve the Lord, we must follow the Lord. When the Lord was on the earth, He walked a path that we who serve Him today must follow. Whatever way He took, we must also take. Wherever He was, we must also be. We must choose the cross and die to ourselves and everything, willingly taking the way of the cross just as He did. He refused His own will and lived in God's will; we must do the same. We must follow Him and be with Him in order to serve Him.

In serving the Lord we most certainly must serve the people of our own generation. However, we must do it "by the counsel of God" just as David did in his time. If we do not serve people by the counsel of God, we are merely

serving people and it cannot be counted as serving God. Only things done by the counsel of God can be counted as service to the Lord.

Because our service to the Lord is the service of a slave, we should act according to the Lord's will and not according to our own desires. Thus, to serve the Lord we need to be able to hear His word. We are able to know the Lord's will because we can hear His word. One who serves the Lord must be able to hear the Lord well, so he knows the Lord's will and serves according to the Lord's desire in order to please the Lord. It is for this reason that in the Old Testament type, God wanted the master to bore through the ear of the slave who wanted him forever. We must have ears that can hear. Our ears must be dealt with by the Lord. He must bore through them so we can hear His word and serve Him.

Once we have ears to hear we still must stand before the Lord to contact Him and minister to Him. Then we will know what He wants us to do and how He wants us to do it. It is only in this way that we are serving Him according to His will, matching His heart's desire and are acceptable to Him.

In serving the Lord, we need not only to contact Him and stand before Him, we also need fasting and prayer to seek Him. Fasting means we are willing to give up our legal enjoyment causing ourselves to suffer in order to seek the Lord's desire and accomplish the Lord's will. Prayer is to ask the Lord to reveal His desire and to accomplish His will. We must not lack prayer and fasting in our service to the Lord. A strong service to the Lord most certainly includes both prayer and fasting. (The Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 3, Ch. 29)

The church is the Body of Christ, and Christ is the Head of the church. The life which we receive from Him causes us to be His Body. Hence, His life in us is the life of the Body, which we commonly possess. If we live in this life, not only will we live in Him and be joined to Him, but out from Him all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love. The coordination, serving, and functioning of all the members cause the growth of His Body unto the building.

One who lives in Christ's life must be one who lives in the Body of Christ—the church, who is fitly joined together with all the members, and who serves in coordination. Christ's life in us is the life of His Body which causes us to be His Body, thus if we still have our individual action and our own opinion in our service to the Lord, this will prove that we are still living in our self. If we live in Christ's life, we will not be able to be individualistic in our service to the Lord. Christ's life requires us to serve with all the saints in coordination in His Body—the church.

THE REWARD OF SERVING THE LORD

"If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him" (John 12:26). There are rewards for serving the Lord. The first kind of reward is being honored by God. This is a great matter. It should cause us to pursue serving the Lord.

"Blessed are those slaves whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Truly I tell you that he will gird himself and will have them recline at table, and he will come to them and serve them" (Luke 12:37). Today we are the Lord's slaves serving Him. When the Lord returns, this will cause us to receive the blessing of "reclining at table" and being "served" by the Lord. Of course that blessing is a reward for our service to the Lord.

"Well done, good and faithful slave, ...I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 25:21; 24:47; Luke 19:17). If we are a good and faithful slave of the Lord today, in the future we will receive the Lord's reward. He will set us over many things and we will enter into His joy. (Ch. 29)

QUESTIONS

1. Please describe briefly the motive and the meaning of serving the Lord.
2. Please describe briefly the purpose of serving the Lord.
3. Please describe briefly how to serve the Lord.
4. Please describe briefly what are the rewards in serving the Lord.

LESSON TWO

THE UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD

Scripture Reading:

1 Pet. 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Pet. 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Rev. 5:9 And they sing a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Rev. 5:10a And have made them a kingdom and priests to our God.

Hymn: 913

OUTLINE

I. The whole body serving being the greatest recovery today—1 Pet. 2:9:

A. The loss and the recovery of the priesthood:

1. God securing the place of rest through the priests.

2. God calling the Israelites to be a kingdom of priests.

3. The Israelites having failed, the priesthood becoming the special privilege of the tribe of Levi.

4. In the New Testament, God intending the church to be the kingdom of priests.

5. The church today not having arrived at God's goal yet.

B. The way today being for the whole body to serve.

C. The whole body taking the gospel as our center.

D. Realizing the glory and grace of serving God.

II. The history of the priesthood and its changes:

A. God's salvation being to obtain a kingdom of priests—Exo. 19:6.

Exo. 19:6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel.

B. The degradation of the Israelites Resulting in a kingdom of priests becoming a tribe of priests—Exo. 32:1-29; Num. 8:5-19.

Exo. 32:1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered against Aaron and said to him, Come, make a god for us who will go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.

Exo. 32:2 And Aaron said to them, Tear off the gold rings, which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.

Exo. 32:3 And all the people tore off the golden rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron.

Exo. 32:4 And he took the gold from their hand and fashioned it with an engraving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!

Exo. 32:5 And when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; then Aaron made a proclamation and said, Tomorrow shall be a feast to Jehovah.

Exo. 32:6 And they rose up early on the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

Exo. 32:7 And Jehovah spoke to Moses, Go, get down; for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.

Exo. 32:8 They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and they have worshipped it and have sacrificed to it and said, This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!

Exo. 32:9 And Jehovah said to Moses, I have seen this people, and indeed they are, a stiff-necked people.

Exo. 32:10 Now therefore let Me be, that My anger may burn against them, and I may consume them; and I will make of you a great nation.

Exo. 32:11 And Moses entreated Jehovah his God and said, Jehovah, why does Your anger burn against Your people, whom You brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

Exo. 32:12 Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, With evil intent He brought them out, to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your burning anger, and repent of this evil

against Your people.

Exo. 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself and said to them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of I will give to your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.

Exo. 32:14 Thus Jehovah repented of the ill which He said He would do to His people.

Exo. 32:15 Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both of their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

Exo. 32:16 And the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tablets.

Exo. 32:17 And when Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, There is a sound of war in the camp.

Exo. 32:18 But Moses said, It is not the sound of the cry of triumph, / Neither is it the sound of the cry of defeat; / But it is the sound of singing that I hear.

Exo. 32:19 And as soon as he drew near to the camp, he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.

Exo. 32:20 And he took the calf which they had made, and he burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it upon the water and made the children of Israel drink it.

Exo. 32:21 And Moses said to Aaron, What did this people do to you that you brought so great a sin upon them?

Exo. 32:22 And Aaron said, Do not let the anger of my lord burn. You know the people, that they are set on evil;

Exo. 32:23 For they said to me, Make a god for us who will go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.

Exo. 32:24 So I said to them, Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off; so they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out.

Exo. 32:25 And when Moses saw that the people were without restraint (for Aaron had let them be without restraint to be a derision among those who rise up against them),

Exo. 32:26 Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Whoever is for Jehovah, come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves to him.

Exo. 32:27 And he said to them, Thus says Jehovah the God of Israel, Let each man put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each man kill his brother, and each man his companion, and each man his neighbor.

Exo. 32:28 And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses, and that day about three thousand men among the people fell.

Exo. 32:29 And Moses said, Consecrate yourselves today to Jehovah, for every man has been against his son and against his brother, that He may bestow upon you a blessing today.

Num. 8:5 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,

Num. 8:6 Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them.

Num. 8:7 And thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle the water of purification upon them, and let them pass a razor over all their flesh and wash their clothes and cleanse themselves.

Num. 8:8 Then let them take a bull of the herd and its meal offering, fine flour mingled with oil; and a second bull of the herd you shall take for a sin offering.

Num. 8:9 And you shall present the Levites before the Tent of Meeting, and gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel.

Num. 8:10 And you shall present the Levites before Jehovah, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands upon the Levites.

Num. 8:11 And Aaron shall offer the Levites before Jehovah as a wave offering from the children of Israel, that they may do the service of Jehovah.

Num. 8:12 And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bulls, and you shall offer the one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to Jehovah to make expiation for the Levites.

Num. 8:13 And you shall set the Levites before Aaron and before his sons, and offer them as a wave offering to Jehovah.

Num. 8:14 Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine.

Num. 8:15 Then after this the Levites may go in to do the service of the Tent of Meeting. So you shall cleanse them and offer them as a wave offering.

Num. 8:16 For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them for Myself instead of everyone who opens the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel.

Num. 8:17 For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine, both human and animal. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself.

Num. 8:18 And I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel.

Num. 8:19 And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the Tent of Meeting, and to make expiation for the children of Israel, that there may be no plague among the children of Israel, when the

children of Israel come near to the sanctuary.

C. In the New Testament, God's desire being for the church to be a kingdom of priests.—1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6.

1 Pet. 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Rev.1:6 And made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.

III. All redeemed ones needing to serve God:

A. All the saved ones serving God.

B. A person needing to forsake everything to serve God as soon as He is saved (1 Cor. 12:18), Matt. 19:22.

Matt. 19:22 But the young man, hearing this word, went away sorrowing, for he had many possessions.

C. The whole Body consecrating, ushering in a thorough service.

IV. The universal priesthood of the New Testament—Rev. 5:9-10a; 1 Pet. 2:5:

Rev. 5:9 And they sing a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

Rev. 5:10a And have made them a kingdom and priests to our God.

1 Pet. 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

A. Everyone preaching the gospel—Matt. 28:19.

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

B. Everyone attending the home and group meetings—Heb. 10:24-25.

Heb. 10:24 And let us consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works,

Heb. 10:25 Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.

C. Everyone prophesying for the Lord—1 Cor. 14:26, 31.

1 Cor. 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

1 Cor. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

REFERENCE

The Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, Vol. 2, Msgs. 47, 61; New Testament Priests of the Gospel, Ch. 3.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE WHOLE BODY SERVING BEING THE GREATEST RECOVERY TODAY

We have to see that if the one-talented ones do not rise up to serve, there is no way for the church to go on. The priesthood is a universal priesthood. This is the greatest recovery of this (20) century. Many people think that the matter of service is the work of a few people, but true service is that in which the whole Body is involved (1 Pet. 2:9). As long as this matter is not fully recovered, we have to go on speaking.

The Loss and the Recovery of the Priesthood

The priests are the ones who serve God. Those who serve God are called the priests. They may do a lot of other works, but none of those works can be considered true service. Only one thing is true service, and that is to dwell in the temple. In the Old Testament, there was the tabernacle. After the tabernacle, there was the temple. Within the temple, there was the dwelling of the priests. The book of Psalms mentions seven or eight times the matter of dwelling on the house of Jehovah. The work of the priests was to go to God on behalf of men and to go to men on behalf of God. In order for God to be among men, to dwell with men, and to find rest among men, He has to have the priests. Only when God secures the priests will He find a resting place.

The holy place and the priesthood are the twofold requirements of God. The work of the priests is to serve God, and the holy place is the dwelling place for the priests; it is also the dwelling place of God. Melchisedec was a priest of God. But he was alone, and he could not satisfy God. What God wants is a kingdom of priests. This is why He called out a people and brought them through the Red Sea into the wilderness. The purpose was to secure for Himself a kingdom of priests (Exo. 19:6). In God's eyes, God's people and the priesthood are one and the same thing. God desires that the whole nation of Israel be a priesthood. As long as a person is one of His people, he should be a priest. This is why Moses told Pharaoh, "Let my people go, that they may serve me" (Exo. 8:1; 9:1). Every one of God's people is there to serve God. As such, every one of them should be a priest.

The law is God's testimony. What the law gives to man is what man ought to give to God. The law is God's testimony for Himself. Whatever God says to man, man should say the same thing to God. The law says that the children of Israel should be a kingdom of priests. Yet before the law was passed on to the hands of the Israelites, while it was still in the hands of Moses, the Israelites had fallen and had worshipped the golden calf.

After Moses came down from the mountain, he ordered all the men to kill their own brothers and sisters. The Levites did according to what Moses said and killed over three thousand people. As a result of this, God chose the tribe of Levi to be the priests (Exo. 32:1-28; Deut. 33:8-10). Originally, it was a kingdom of priests. Now only one out of twelve tribes was to be the priests. From that time on, apart from the tribe of Levi, no one had the right to be priests. In the book of Judges, even when men had money, they could only hire the Levites as priests for them; they themselves could not be priests. In the Old Testament, one king tried to be a priest and was smitten with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16-20). All those who serve according to their own will, will be smitten. To serve God is both a privilege and a right.

What the Israelites had lost is today regained by the church. God desires that the church today be the kingdom of priests. Peter said that we are a royal priesthood and a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5). In Revelation, the apostle John said that we are all priests (Rev. 1:6). All the gold and silver are for the temple

and the tabernacle; they are not for the golden calf. No one should worship a calf, not even the golden calf. A man has to learn to execute God's judgment and to deal with the golden calf. Only by this dealing will the real service be produced, and only then will the "Levites" rise up.

Today not everyone is serving yet. Only when the priests and the people become one entity is there the church. Our service today is only the service of three or five people; it is not the service of the whole Body. We have become the Jewish nation of today, with only one tribe serving, while the other eleven tribes rely on the service of the Levites. Other that the "Levites," no one else is qualified to serve any longer. Yet God's desire is that the whole Body would serve.

The Way Today Being for the Whole Body to Serve

My co-worker brothers, no matter how prevailing your ministry is, how many gifts you have, and how useful and strong you are, as long as you replace others' service, you are a Nicolaitan! Not only do you have nothing to boast of; you have to confess your sin instead. Personal godliness not only does nothing to build up the church; it actually tears down the church. The way of the work, the proper way, is to help every brother and sister to do the work himself or herself. It is not a question of much service or little service. It is a question of everyone serving. Unless we are all serving together, we are not the church. This is our way today. It has to be the church that is working. It has to be the church that is preaching the gospel. It has to be the church that is saving the souls. No matter how well you work, as long as you are replacing others, you are one of the Nicolaitans. With you there is only the ministry; there is no church. Even if you are a so-called spiritual giant or a revival evangelist, if you do not bring in the service of the whole Body, whatever you do, you are a failure.

The Whole Body Taking the Gospel As Our Center

The gospel is our occupation. Everything else is done on the side only. We have to take the gospel as our center. Our occupation is only to keep ourselves alive and to sustain our body to live on this earth; the purpose of our occupation is for the gospel. The real preaching of the gospel is done by the

whole Body. The preaching of the gospel by three or five cannot be considered the real preaching. What we need today is for the whole Body, that is, everyone, to preach the gospel. If the brothers and sisters see that the church is a Body, they will not be individualistic any longer. The most blessed and happy thing is to give oneself to the gospel. Only when our money is with God will we be joyful. Many people may have too many material riches with them. This is why they are not happy. If they would lose some of what they have, their joy will increase. This is a great matter. The question is not whether one's occupation is high or low. The question is: "What are we here for?" Some work in their jobs, while others take care of their families at home. But everyone has to give his all for the gospel. (The Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, pp. 338-342)

Realizing the Glory and Grace of Serving God

Brothers, how should we answer God's call? In the old days, men tried to usurp the priesthood. Today, the priesthood is in our hands already. Are we going to cast it aside? What the Israelites had lost was lost; they could not recover it any longer. Are we going to make the service of God something cheap in our hands? For some, service to God is a matter of granting God a favor. But we have to see that for God to allow us to serve Him is His grace and favor on us. When a man does not see the glory of serving the Lord, he calculates everything. But when he sees the glory of serving Him, he would kneel before God to beg for this service. Recently the newspaper said that Chine Textile Corporation is issuing new shares. When the stock market is up, everyone wants to buy. As long as they have money, they would put it into the market. Do we see the glory of serving God today? Those who see it will surely give their all for it. (The Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, pp. 342-343)

THE HISTORY OF THE PRIESTHOOD AND ITS CHANGES

God's Saving the Children of Israel to Make them a Kingdom of Priests

God said explicitly that He would make the Israelites a kingdom of priests (Exo. 19:6). The priests are those who wait on God and follow God. No one else is able to come as close to God as the priests can. Their job is to serve God. The Israelites were to be a kingdom of priests; the whole nation was to be priests.

The priests' eating, their living, and their slaughtering of the bulls and the goats were all for the purpose of serving God. The proper profession of the priests was to serve God; everything else was a sideline. They were not working as teachers, doctors, or in any other professions. Exodus 19 tells us that God intended that all the Israelites, old or young, great or small, male or female, were to be the priests.

The goal of God's salvation is to gain the priests (Rev. 1:5-6a). The blood of the Passover lamb delivered the Israelites with the goal of obtaining and ushering in a kingdom of priests. The greatest calling and also the greatest grace is that men can serve God as priests. As many as there were who left Egypt, the same number were to serve God. As many as there were who reached Sinai, that many should swerve the Lord. (The Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, pp. 461-462)

The Degradation of the Israelites Resulting in a Kingdom of Priests Becoming a Tribe of Priests

At the bottom of the mountain, the Israelites worshipped the golden calf and sinned against God. As a result, Moses told the people to kill their own brothers. However, only the Levites obeyed Moses' words, and they killed three thousand people (Exo. 32:1-29). The loss of three thousand men was not the greatest loss. The greatest loss was that the people could not all be priests any longer. Originally, it was twelve tribes who were to be the priests. Now only one tribe was left (Num. 8:5-19). Originally, it was to be a kingdom of priests. Now it became a tribe of priests. The Levites did not care for human feelings or sentiments, and they stood on God's side. As a result, they gained the priesthood. Here we see that some had forsaken their priesthood. They

had forsaken it through the worship of the idol; they established another worship.

In the New Testament, God's Desire Being for the Church to Be a Kingdom of Priests

Eleven out of twelve tribes were kept outside the tabernacle, and only the tribe of Levi was admitted into the tabernacle. This lasted until the New Testament, when Peter said in his first Epistle, "But you are...a royal priesthood" (2:9). Now everyone becomes a servant of God. At the end of the New Testament, in A.D. 95, when John was about to die, he said that we have been made "a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Rev. 1:6). God's intention toward the church today is for everyone to be a priest. We are a kingdom of priests. What the Israelites had lost, God is recovering through the church. Through their unfaithfulness, the Israelites lost the priestly kingdom. God's intention today is for every Christian to be recovered to be a priest. (The Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, p. 463)

ALL REDEEMED ONES NEEDING TO SERVE GOD

At present, among God's children there seems to be a common phenomenon that only a certain group of people are serving. However, God's word says that everyone who belongs to God is a servant of God. When the Israelites were in Egypt serving as slaves, they did not have any freedom. God delivered them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea for the purpose that they would serve Him in the wilderness (Exo. 3:18). The number of people under the blood was the number of people who left Egypt. The number of saved ones was the number of serving ones. When the Israelites left Egypt, they brought all the gold and silver with them (Exo. 12:35-36). Hence, as many as there were who were redeemed, that many served God in material offerings, and that many followed the tabernacle. It was not just a minority who served. Both in the Old Testament and in the New as well, there was not a distinction between the serving ones and the non-serving ones. Only

degraded Christianity makes a distinction between the serving ones and the non-serving ones. (p. 461)

All the Saved Ones Serving God

Any service that is not in the nature of a priestly kingdom is wrong. The church has been selected out of the world already. There cannot be a further selection within the church. As long as there is no sin, no fall, and no golden calf, God forbids any further separation. As many as there are who are redeemed by the blood, that many should serve....Service should include the same number that salvation includes....The problem today is that God is not satisfied even when ninety-nine percent of the people are serving. God wants everyone to be serving. We do not believe that a majority of the people should serve, while a minority of the people do not serve. Neither do we believe that a minority of the people should serve, while a majority of the people do not serve. Service is not the work of the ministers, or the work of a few evangelists. Why do we speak so much about the Body service? It is because it is a matter that belongs to all the brothers and sisters.

A Person Needing to Forsake Everything to Serve God As Soon As He Is Saved

God's word tells us that we are those who have received God's mercy. But what should we do now? Christianity thinks that a man is first saved through the Lord's blood and by His grace, and then goes on further to forsake the world. As he advances further, he drops everything to serve God. This is degraded Christianity. According to God's word, as soon as a man is saved, and as soon as he steps into the entrance, the Lord tells him to take up the cross (Matt. 16:24). Either a man does not become a disciple, or he has to be one in an absolute way. The Lord sets the price clearly right from the beginning for every saved one. The first day they come, they see the tomb. The first day they come, they are asked to forsake the world. We cannot lower down the gospel, and make the gospel no more the gospel. The Lord never lowers the price to attract customers. The gospel is the least expensive thing there is. Yet at the same time, it is the most costly thing there is. If we are to

be saved, we have to be saved in a clear-cut way. Only those who have paid a high price can feel the joy.

The Whole Body Consecrating, Ushering In a Thorough Service

Today (service) responsibility is on the whole Body. When we read 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, we see that service belongs to the whole Body; it is not a service of three or five special people. For this reason, we asked all the brothers and sisters to hand themselves over. What the Lord wants is absolute service. We hope that every brother and sister can get through in this matter. The Lord wants such an absolute service. Not only the co-workers need coordination in their work; every brother and sister needs to be coordinated also. (pp. 462-466)

THE UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Everyone Preaching the Gospel

The priesthood that God ordained for everyone is one in which all the saved ones are priests. Moreover, the foremost offering in the New Testament is the offering of the saved sinners to God. This is the first function of the priests of the New Testament.

For this reason, after the coming of the New Testament age, God revealed to the last priest of the Old Testament, John the Baptist, that he was not to offer up bulls and goats anymore. Instead, he should offer up sinners in Christ. After this, the Lord Jesus came. He was also a real priest. He continued to bring sinners to salvation. The Lord Jesus also sent out disciples to preach the gospel. First, He sent out the twelve (Luke 6:12-16). Then He sent out seventy (Luke 10:1-24). After His resurrection the Lord said to the disciples, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:18b, 19). The Lord sent us to all the nations to preach the gospel to every man, baptizing them into Himself, and offering them up as sacrifices to God. In the Epistles Paul also said that he

"should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that the offering of the nations might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16). Paul was a priest of the gospel of God. He offered up the saved Gentiles as offerings to God. (The New Testament Priests of the Gospel, pp. 40-41)

Home and Group Meetings

In Colossians 1:28 Paul said, "Warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man full-grown in Christ." To be presented full-grown is similar to being picked as ripe fruit in an orchard during harvest time. This whole process of growth is included in the home meetings, the group meetings, and the district meetings. In the end, through these different meetings we will be perfected step by step until we can finally be presented to God full-grown. (The New Testament Priests of the Gospel, p. 43)

Prophesying for the Lord

Today we have to see that we are all New Testament priests. Everyone needs to preach the gospel. Everyone has to attend the home meetings and group meetings. Everyone must prophesy. When we prophesy, we have to exercise our spirit. There must be not only the revelation and the light; there must be the inspiration also. In this way Christ will be spoken into others. Only when all these things are put into practice can the universal priesthood be realized. (p. 43)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, describe briefly why the whole Body has to serve.

2. According to the Bible, describe briefly the history of the priesthood and its changes.

3. According to the Bible, describe briefly why all the redeemed ones should serve God.

4. According to the Bible, describe briefly what is the universal priesthood in the New Testament?

LESSON THREE

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE PRACTICE OF THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY

Scripture Reading:

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

1 Thes. 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.

Eph. 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

1 Cor. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

Hymn: 1232

OUTLINE

I. Begetting—gaining people by knocking on doors:

A. Being one with the Lord fearing no difficulties.

B. "Go therefore and disciple all the nations"—Matt. 28:19.

II. Nourishing—caring in the home meetings:

A. As mothers cherishing new believers—1 Thes. 2:7.

B. Use the Word of God to nourish new ones.

III. Teaching—instructing and perfecting in the small group meetings—Eph. 4:11 12:

A. In the small group meetings, the believers have mutual fellowship, prayer, care, and shepherding; they teach and instruct one another, learn the truth together, and pursue the growth in the spiritual life

to promote various services in the church life, such as preaching the gospel, taking care the new ones, and leading the small groups.

B. The small group meeting is the major part of the church life and church services.

IV. Building—prophesying in the district meetings—1 Cor. 14:31:

A. To speak for God and to speck forth God and to supply Christ to others.

B. To speak the words for building up, encouragement and consolation for the building up of the church—1 Cor. 14:3-5.

1 Cor. 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks building up and encouragement and consolation to men.

1 Cor. 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.

1 Cor. 14:5 I desire that you all speak in tongues, but especially that you would prophesy; and greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, that the church may receive building up.

V. The living of the new way:

A. Being revived every morning—Lam. 3:22-23:

Lam. 3:22 It is Jehovah's lovingkindness that we are not consumed, For His compassions do not fail;

Lam. 3:23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

1. The first step in the exercise of the spirit—calling upon the name of the Lord.

2. The second step in the exercise of the spirit—pray-reading the Lord's word.

B. Being renewed every day—2 Cor. 4:16.

2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

VI. The life-pulse of the practice of the new way—the homes:

A. In the age of the apostles, the churches were built up in the saints' homes—Rom. 16.

Rom. 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea,

Rom. 16:2 That you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and

assist her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been the patroness of many, of myself as well.

Rom. 16:3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,

Rom. 16:4 Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;

Rom. 16:5 And greet the church, which is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ.

Rom. 16:6 Greet Mary, one who has labored much for you.

Rom. 16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Rom. 16:8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.

Rom. 16:9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved.

Rom. 16:10 Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those of the household of Aristobulus.

Rom. 16:11 Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

Rom. 16:12 Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Greet Persis, the beloved sister, one who has labored much in the Lord.

Rom. 16:13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother as well as mine.

Rom. 16:14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers with them.

Rom. 16:15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints with them.

Rom. 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Rom. 16:17 Now I exhort you, brothers, to mark those who make divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them.

Rom. 16:18 For such men do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own stomach, and through smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Rom. 16:19 For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and guileless as to what is evil.

Rom. 16:20 Now the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Rom. 16:21 Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you, as well as Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

Rom. 16:22 I, Tertius, who write this epistle, greet you in the Lord.

Rom. 16:23 Gaius, my host and host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, greets you, and Quartus the brother.

Rom. 16:24 (Some ancient MSS add v. 24, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.)

Rom. 16:25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, that is, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages

Rom. 16:26 But has now been manifested, and through the prophetic writings, according to the command of the eternal God, has been made known to all the Gentiles for the obedience of faith;

Rom. 16:27 To the only wise God through Jesus Christ, to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

B. The mouthpiece of the gospel is man, and the outlet of the gospel is the homes—Acts 2:46, 5:42.

Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart.

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ.

C. We not only need to preach the gospel, but we also need to open our homes to give a great reception for Jesus to preach the gospel—Acts 10:1-5; Luke 5:27-29.

Acts 10:1 Now there was in Caesarea a certain man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort,

Acts 10:2 Devout and one who feared God with all his household, giving many alms to the people and beseeching God continually.

Acts 10:3 He saw clearly in a vision around the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him and saying to him, Cornelius.

Acts 10:4 And he looked intently at him and became terrified and said, What is it, Lord? And he said to him, Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

Acts 10:5 And now send men to Joppa and send for a certain Simon, who is surnamed Peter.

Luke 5:27 And after these things He went out and beheld a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, Follow Me.

Luke 5:28 And leaving all, he rose up and followed Him.

Luke 5:29 And Levi gave a great reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and others who were reclining at table with them.

D. In this way, blessing will not only come to us but to generation

after generation following us—Exo. 20:6.

Exo. 20:6 Yet showing lovingkindness to thousands of generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

REFERENCE

The Organic Practice of the New Way, Chs. 1-6, Rising Up to Preach the Gospel, Ch. 4

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

BEGETTING—GAINING PEOPLE BY KNOCKING ON DOORS

The service that God ordains for us in His New Testament economy is first to "Go therefore and disciple all the nations" (Matt. 28:19). The meaning of the word "go" is very extensive. When you go, surely you have to visit people. After our prolonged study, we have discovered that to visit people by knocking on their doors is the most effective way to carry out the going.

How do we bear fruit by bringing people to salvation?...That's visiting of people by knocking on their doors to save men through the preaching of the gospel. Strictly speaking, it is not a matter of knocking on doors. Rather, it is a matter of contacting people. To save people, we have to contact them....The Lord says in Acts 1:8 that "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the remotest part of the earth." In preaching the gospel, we work from the center to the circumference, and then to the remotest part of the earth. Hence, you must first preach the gospel to your close relatives. Next you should go to your cousins and in-laws. In addition, your neighbors, classmates, and colleagues are all good potential targets. There are also lots of people on the public parks on the weekends. You can stop by one of the parks and preach the gospel to someone there. The opportunity abounds everywhere. The question is whether or not we are willing to do it.

If you are to preach the gospel to your colleagues, first you have to build up a reputation. When they know that you are a "Jesus-fanatic," and that the more you speak about Jesus, the more people change, they will begin to trust in you and will gradually believe in what you preach. There was a brother who used to work in the Telegraph Company. He preached to others all the time. His colleagues nicknamed him "Jesus." When he came into the office, everyone made fun of him by saying, "Hi, Jesus!" One day, the Telegraph Company encountered a problem. There was a sum of money that need to be entrusted to someone. Everyone agreed that it should be entrusted to "Jesus." After all, it was "Jesus" that they trusted in. When you preach the gospel and others mock you, there may be the feeling of being ill-treated. However, others know in their heart that you are actually the reliable one. (The Organic Practice of the New Way, pp. 23-24)

NOURISHING—CARING IN THE HOME MEETINGS

After visiting people, preaching the gospel to them, and bringing them to salvation, you should care for them in the home meetings. This is like a mother who has just given birth to a baby; she has to nurse the baby. All the mothers know that it is very easy for a child to die during the first three months after he is born. The mother must care for the baby carefully and cautiously. After three months, the condition is more stable. In the same way, after you baptize a person, you should preferably spend one to two hours to nourish and teach him. Within three days, you must go back to him. Thereafter, you should visit him on an average of once every three days, or two times a week. If you care for him in this way for a month, his condition will become stable. To get the best result, the same person should beget, nourish, and care for the new one.

As soon as a person rises up from baptism, you need to have a long time of fellowship with him. This is his first home meeting. I suggest that you talk to him about the Lord being the life-giving Spirit and being one spirit with us. You should tell him, "The Jesus whom you have believed in has become the life-giving Spirit today. Originally, He was God becoming the flesh on earth. But for the bearing of our sins, He died on the cross for us and shed His precious blood. After He died and was buried, He resurrected again after

three days to become the life-giving Spirit. This Spirit is just like the air; He is everywhere. Although He cannot be touched or seen, He is more real that everything else. Everyone needs Him. Moreover, this Spirit is personified; that is, He is a person, a divine person. That is why if you call on His name today, He will enter into you. In addition, when God created us, He created us with a spirit. Not only do we have an outward body; we have a soul within also. Inside the soul, there is a spirit, which is our innermost person. Today, this pneumatic Lord has entered into our spirit and has regenerated our spirit, so that the two spirits are now one spirit. Now your calling and praying must be from this spirit." Following this, you can lead him to pray. By then, he may feel ashamed of himself. You can then lead him to confess his sins to the Lord. As long as a person is willing to confess his sins, everything will work out. This is like a person who has taken the wrong kind of food into the stomach. When the wrong food is vomited out and the stomach is cleared, everything will be recovered. When a person has "vomited out" all his sins, the result is the filling up of the Holy Spirit. With all these words, you have enough to talk about for the first home meeting. After this, you should set up an appointment for the next meeting. Preferably, it should be within the next one or two days. The reason for this is that newborn babies need special care. (The Organic Practice to the New Way, pp. 25-26)

TEACHING—INSTRUCTING AND PERFECTING IN THE SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

How should the small group meetings be conducted? The key is to be organic. The small group meeting should begin from your own home. Although the time of the meeting may be scheduled at 7:30, you should begin praying at home before seven o'clock. While you are on the way to the meeting, you should continue to pray and praise. When you arrive at the brother's house, you may find that some brothers are there already. You should then begin the meeting by praising, praying, or fellowshipping. The content of the meeting should be of the following items only: the first is fellowship; the second is prayer; the third is mutual care; the fourth is the teaching of the truth; the fifth is the pursuit of life; and the sixth is the mutual encouragement and teaching, and the preaching of the gospel by going out to

visit people. Every time the small group comes together, whatever it does, the content should be one of these six things.

Not only do you have to feed a newly baptized one, but you must bring him to a nearby small group meeting as well. You need to tell him, “Christians are communal. They are not like the butterflies. Rather they are like the bees and the sheep. Let me take you to see a group of Christians nearby.” However, by bringing him to the small group meeting, you should not let the others take over your job; you have to continue feeding and caring for him.

Concerning the small group meetings, I would first beg you to drop the all too legal practice that you have had before. The principle of attending the small group meeting is the same as that for the home meeting. You must be a person who is revived. Before you go to the meeting, you must first pray and have yourself enlivened. You must confess your sins thoroughly and be filled with the Holy Spirit completely. In this way, you will be a praying, singing, and living person. The small group meeting should consist of the following five things: fellowship, prayer, mutual care, the teaching of the truth, and the guidance in life. The Chinese are traditionally taught to be quiet. But when we come to the small group meeting, the minute we see each other, we have to speak. One may say, “The Bible is wonderful. This morning I read Matthew chapter one. The name Jesus Christ is really sweet.” Another may say, “Yes, I also realize that Jesus Christ is really sweet.” Another may say, “Yes, I also realize that Jesus Christ is wonderful. However, maybe I could share something with you. I don’t know why, but for the whole day today, I have had a problem with coughing.” In this way the fellowship begins. Perhaps by that time not everyone has arrived yet. You do not have to wait for everyone to be there. Instead you can start praying, “O Lord, remember our brother’s cough.” After the prayer, perhaps one brother would say that he has a good remedy, that it is not expensive, but is very effective, and that this brother can try it. This is what we mean by mutual care.

In this way, the brothers and sisters will get to know each other and will care for each other like members of the same family. This way will capture, support, and perfect people. The brother that you have invited may ask a question. “I have read the Bible, and I have listened to you speaking on

justification and reconciliation. But what do all these terms mean?" Once this question is raised up, everyone will answer. After one finishes, another may add on, with more points. The older and more mature ones can speak something deeper at the end. We must build up an atmosphere where everyone answers. In this way, everyone speaks and will not take up much time. Perhaps some may bring out a question, "What does the life of God mean?" Everyone begins to answer again. In the answer there is the teaching of the truth as well as the guidance in life. If throughout the fifty-two weeks of the year there is this kind of teaching week after week in the small group meetings, everyone will receive much edification in truth and life. Moreover, everyone will be able to tell others about these things. This is what we mean by an organic practice. (pp. 29-30)

BUILDING—PROPHESYING IN THE DISTRICT MEETINGS

To prophesy is to speak for the Lord and to speak forth the Lord. It is to supply Christ to others. This is the main work in the church meetings. The whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 14 talks about prophesying. It promotes, uplifts, recommends, and encourages prophesying. Verse 1 says, "Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy." In the end, verse 39 says, "Therefore, my brothers, desire earnestly to prophesy." Once you prophesy, you excel (v. 12), and the meeting becomes rich. (The Organic Practice to the New Way, p. 16)

What God wants is a corporate vessel, which is the church, the Body of Christ. We have paid much attention to this matter in the past. During the past two years we have also studied much concerning this. In the end, we see that there is one chapter in the Bible that talks about the building up of the church. It is 1 Corinthians chapter fourteen. It mentions the word "building" at least five times. This chapter deals with nothing other than prophesying. Only prophesying builds up the church. A few verses are particularly important. Verse 1 says, "Desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy." Verses 3 and 4 say, "He who prophesies speaks to men for building up and encouragement and consolation...he who prophesies builds up the church." Verse 12 says, "Since you are zealots of spiritual gifts, seek

that you may abound to the building up of the church." Verse 24 says, "But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is judged by all." Verse 31 says, "For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all be encouraged." From these verses, we see that the most important thing with our meeting is the prophesying, which is to speak for the Lord, to speak Him forth, and to speak the Lord into people. Through the speaking of the Lord's word, the riches of Christ are released and are dispensed into all the attendants. Finally, verse 39 says, "Therefore, my brothers, desire earnestly to prophesy." From this, we can see that this whole chapter is on prophesying from beginning to end. (The Organic Practice to the New Way, pp. 25-26)

THE LIVING OF THE NEW WAY—

Being Revived Every Morning

In today's world, there is no one who is not busy. We have to use our time just as we use our money. There must first be a budget. We have to devote the first part of our time to the Lord. The first thing we do every morning when we rise up is to exercise our spirit, because today the Lord is in our spirit. For us to enjoy the Lord, to receive Him, to gain Him, and to experience Him is altogether a matter of the spirit. If our spirit is not functioning today, our relationship with the Lord is through. For this reason, every morning when we wake up, the first thing we must do is exercise our spirit. We have to call on the Lord. If circumstances permit, we have to take up the Bible and pray-read. If it is inconvenient to do so, we have to pull out some verses from our memory and pray-read with them. Whatever we do, we have to spend some time pray-reading. This way of exercise is like having a thorough bath from inside out in the Lord's word. It is like taking a spiritual shower; we are washed from head to toe in the Lord's word, and our whole being is fully refreshed. (p. 50)

Being Renewed Everyday

We have been talking about all kinds of practices in the new way: the preaching of the gospel by knocking on doors, the home meetings, the small group meetings, and prophesying in the meetings. All these are but outward

ways and activities. The new way is actually a way of life. Today, all of us have to live a life of touching the Lord every morning to be revived every day. Every morning we need a new beginning. To us every day should be new. In this revived and renewed living, we will spontaneously care for others, and we will spontaneously share with others the Christ whom we enjoy and the Savior whom we have received. In this way, others will be able to enjoy with us the portion that God has given to us. God has not given the privilege of preaching the gospel to the angels. Rather He has given this utmost honor to us. Therefore, in our daily life, we spontaneously go out to visit people. This visitation is to bear gifts to others' homes. We politely offer the Christ that we enjoy throughout the day as a gift to others. This is our duty. It is also our honor. (The Organic Practice to the New Way, p. 52)

THE LIFE-PULSE OF THE PRACTICE OF THE NEW WAY—THE HOMES

What is the mouthpiece of the gospel. The mouthpiece of the gospel is man. We are the mouthpiece of the gospel, and the outlet of the gospel is the homes. Our home is the outlet of the gospel. If your home is not given for the Lord's use, you are one who preach the gospel individually, and you have the mouthpiece but not the way. Acts shows us that in the time of Peter, the disciples not only broke the bread from "house by house" (2:46), but they also announced the gospel of Jesus as the Christ from "house to house" (5:42). In Greek, the word announce is the verb form of the word "gospel," meaning that they announced the gospel of Jesus as the Christ. If every house announces the gospel of Jesus as the Christ, then every house will speak Christ. Hence, we not only need to preach the gospel, but we also have to open our homes.

Luke 5 gives us an excellent example. When the Lord Jesus saw a tax collector, a slave of money, Levi, He called him to follow Him. After Levi heard the Lord's calling, he left all, rose up, followed the Lord, and was saved. Once Levi was saved, he gave a great reception for the Lord Jesus in his house. He did not invite Jesus alone or any prominent officials and eminent personages; instead, he invited many tax collectors and sinners (vv. 27-29). Because he himself is a sinner, his friends were not good men but a bunch of rogues; he invited them also to recline with the Lord. The Lord was the guest

of honor, and all the other guests were sinners. This is a good example of opening the homes for the preaching of the gospel. Once we open our homes, the gospel will have an outlet; without the homes, the gospel will have no outlet. Now we have a lot of mouthpieces, what we need is the outlet; hence, we must open our homes. (Rising Up To Preach The Gospel, pp. 76-77 in Chinese)

Therefore, I hope that all of you will open your homes to give a great reception for Jesus, inviting "sinners" as your guests, and preach the gospel to them...If you open your homes, you will not suffer any loss; on the contrary, you will be blessed. The Lord Himself said, "I... showing loving-kindness to thousands of generations of those who love Me" (Exo. 20:6). Hence, for the sake of eternity, we all should open our homes and provide an outlet for the gospel of the Lord. In this way, blessings will not only come to us but to generation after generation following us. (Rising Up To Preach The Gospel, Ch. 4)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, briefly describe the four steps in practicing the God-ordained way.

2. According to the Bible, briefly describe what kind of life should the believers live for the practice of the new way?

3. According to the Bible, briefly describe why the life pulse of the practice of the new way is "homes"?

LESSON FOUR

HOW TO USE THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN LIFE TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

Scripture Reading:

John 15:2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes it away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it that it may bear more fruit.

John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you.

Acts 11:24 For he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a considerable number was added to the Lord.

Hymn: 921

OUTLINE

I. The qualifications and prerequisites in the preaching of the gospel:

A. Aggressive desperation—John 15:2; Matt. 25:24-30; 2 Tim. 4:1-2.

John 15:2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes it away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it that it may bear more fruit.

Matt. 25:24 Then he who had received the one talent also came and said, Master, I knew about you, that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow.

Matt. 25:25 And I was afraid and went off and hid your talent in the earth; behold, you have what is yours.

Matt. 25:26 And his master answered and said to him, Evil and slothful slave, you knew that not sow and gather where I did not winnow.

Matt. 25:27 Therefore you should have deposited my money with the money changers; and when I came, I would have recovered what is mine with interest.

Matt. 25:28 Take away therefore the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.

Matt. 25:29 For to every one who has, more shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him who does not have, even that which he has shall be taken away from him.

Matt. 25:30 And cast out the useless slave into the outer darkness. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

2 Tim. 4:1 I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Tim. 4:2 Proclaim the word; be ready in season and out of season; convict, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching.

B. Absolute consecration—Rom. 12:1.

Rom. 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

C. Uninterrupted abiding in the Lord—John 15:4-5.

John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

D. Full saturation with the word—Col. 3:16.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

E. Prayer for the filling of both the essential and economical Spirit—Acts 11:24, 4:31.

Acts 11:24 For he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a considerable number was added to the Lord.

Acts 4:31 And when they had so besought, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

F. Going with the authority of Christ—Matt. 28:18-19.

Matt. 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

II. The law of an effective door knocking:

A. Praying, confessing, dealing with sins, and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

B. Exercising to speak words of wisdom.

C. Learning to grasp the opportunity.

D. Exercising to continue steadfastly.

III. How to preach the gospel by using The Mystery of Human Life:

A. The first key: God's creation—unlocking the mystery of human existence—Gen. 1:26; Rom. 9:23-24; 1 Thes. 5:23.

Gen. 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Acts 9:23 And as a considerable number of days were being fulfilled, the Jews took counsel together to do away with him;

Acts 9:24 But their plot was made known to Saul. And they also watched the gates closely, both day and night, so that they might do away with him.

1 Thes. 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. The second key: man's fall—unlocking the mystery of the good and evil natures of man—Rom. 7:18, 20; Eph. 2:1; Col. 1:21; Rom. 6:12.

Rom. 7:18 For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not.

Rom. 7:20 But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me.

Eph. 2:1 And you, though dead in your offenses and sins.

Col. 1:21 And you, though once alienated and enemies in your mind because of your evil works.

Rom. 6:12 Do not let sin therefore reign in your mortal body so that you obey the body's lusts.

C. The third key: Christ's redemption—unlocking the mystery of the life and death of the God-man—Col. 2:9; John 1:1, 14, 29; 3:14; 12:24.

Col. 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of

God, who takes away the sin of the world!

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

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.

D. The forth key: God's dispensing—unlocking the mystery of faith in Christ—John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 1 John 5:12; 1 Pet. 1:3; Rom. 8:29-30.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

1 Cor. 15:45 …the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

1 Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;

Rom. 8:30 And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

REFERENCE

Being Desperate and Living Uniquely for the Gospel, Chs. 2-3; Rising Up to Preach the Gospel, Ch. 5; The Mystery of Human Life; The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, Ch. 7

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE QUALIFICATIONS AND PREREQUISITES IN THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

Aggressive Desperation

Matthew 25:14-30...the slothful slave seemingly did not do anything wrong. He did not lose anything. What the Lord gave him, he kept throughout all the years until the Lord came back. ...The slothful slothful slave should have taken the Lord's word solemnly. He was not desperate. Just to keep what the Lord gave you is not sufficient. He wants the interest, the fruit.

In 2 Timothy 4:8Paul says that he will be awarded with the crown of righteousness by the Lord, the righteous Judge. Paul seriously warned and charged Timothy, not by love nor by kindness, but by the Lord's appearing and by His kingdom. You will be either rewarded or be punished by the righteous Judge righteously at His appearing. This is serious.

Since I saw this... I began to be serious. This seriousness has kept me many times from backsliding and from being slothful. One day He will see me and I will meet Him. In His appearing, I have to give Him an account, and He will decide whether I will receive a reward or a punishment in the coming kingdom. It is a solemn thing.

Absolute Consecration

You may have offered yourself to the Lord many times in prayer, but your prayer may not have issued in a practical consecration of your body. What is the practical consecration of your body to the Lord? It is to bear fruit. As a branch you should not be occupied by anything. You should be pruned. Get away from all the preoccupations that you could be spared and completely unoccupied to bear fruit. I do not mean that you have to drop your job or forget about your living. We have to have a job to make a living. Just spend the amount of time and ability needed to make a living. Do not have any intent to make more money to make yourself rich. Forget about that. That will preoccupy your body from bearing fruit. All of us can spare some time for the sake of bearing fruit. We do not need to work more than what is necessary to make an adequate living. Why do you need to work more so that you can drive a more expensive car? Could you not save some time to knock on doors? Do not save time to gain dollars, but to gain souls, to gain persons.

Uninterrupted Abiding in the Lord

To be in the Lord's new move...you must be a right person who always abides in the Lord. To abide in Him means to be one with Him. If you abide in Him, He promises to abide in you. You are in Him, and He is in you. You are just one with Him. Between you and Him there is no middle wall, no break, no interruption. When the Lord sent His disciples to go out, in a sense, that was He Himself going out. When the disciples went out to visit people, that was the Lord going out, so peace was with them. If you are a person abiding in the Lord all the time uninterruptedly, when you go out to knock on people's doors, that is the Lord's knocking. That is the Lord's gracious visitation. You bring the Lord with you, you send the Lord to them, and you share the Lord with them. Every chosen one, every God predestinated one, is a son of peace. They will be happy to receive what you would share with them.

Fully Saturated with the Lord

All (preacher) should be fully saturated and soaked in the Word....You have to get yourself soaked with the Life-studies. Every day at every available time you should read the messages. Do not put them on the shelf. It is good to scatter the Life-studies throughout your house. Turn to any page and read when you have even a little time. If you read it, you will get soaked and saturated. This is building up yourself to make yourself so qualifies, full of the proper divine knowledge of the divine truth. Then you will be so weighty when you speak to people. This makes a great difference....When we go out, we not only have a proper appearance, but we also have the Lord with us and have the building up of the word in our being as a person soaked in the holy truth.

Prayer for the Filling of Both the Essential and Economical Spirit

Acts 11:24 refers to the inward filling of the essential Spirit, and Acts 4:31 refers to the outward filling of the economical Spirit. In Acts 11 Barnabas was one filled with the Holy Spirit essentially and inwardly, so many people turned to the Lord. In Acts 4 the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit outwardly and economically, so they spoke the word of God with boldness. To be filled essentially and economically with the Spirit always requires a

thorough confession. We have to admit we are all sinful persons. We are regenerated, but we are in the body, in the flesh, and are still living on this earth with many dirty things. Physically speaking, how many times do you wash your hands? A doctor told us...if you want to avoid sickness, you had better wash your hands twelve times a day. You have to make a thorough confession many times a day...to get yourself adjusted, to get yourself cleansed, to get yourself right with a right atmosphere....Get yourself fully cleared up, you will surely have the Spirit filling you up inwardly, essentially, and outwardly, economically.

Going with the Authority of Christ

If you have the previous five points, you are surely equipped, qualifies, and ready to go with the power and the authority of Christ. To go to knock on doors means that you command the door to open. Sometimes you have to say, "Door, I knock; you open." When the man is there, give the commandment, not verbally but silently—"Man, listen to me. Let me in." While you are reading The Mystery of Human Life, tell the angels and demons that you are reading to this one with the authority of the ascended Christ. Many brothers and sisters in Taipei experienced this. They were surprised that the people were like lambs. They follow your directions to believe and be baptized. In the past when we talked to people, we did not have this realization. We did not exercise the very right we have been given. We had no intention to exercise our authority to command them to be baptized. Rather, we would tell the new ones that they could wait to be baptized. We gave up our right. Where was your authority to baptize new ones immediately into the Triune God?

Many of people can testify that baptizing the new ones immediately after they received the Lord rally worked and really made people happy. It changes people. In a Buddhist home, after the parents got baptized, with the little children standing by, they said to the idols of Buddha, "Buddha, we have Jesus now. We don't want you and we don't need you. You have to go." Then the parents did away with the idols in the children's presence. This is wonderful! This is the authority of Christ. We go out with a position. We are the ambassadors sent by Him with authority to get people (2 Cor. 5:20). When you go out like this, all the demons will flee. The Devil will be gone,

leaving the person under your hand just like a lamb. (Being Desperate and Living Uniquely for the Gospel, pp. 23-29)

THE LAW OF AN EFFECTIVE DOOR KNOCKING

Praying, Confessing, Dealing With Sins, And Being Filled With The Holy Spirit

When we go door knocking in the community and campuses, we must know how to do it. First, every time before we go out, we must have much and thorough prayers until we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Once we turn to our spirit and pray to the Lord, our inner being is enlightened, and we will sense many things which are improper, just like we come to a mirror and see our real situation. At that time, we have to confess; the more the better. This will cause us to deal with our sins. Until we have nothing more to confess, this is the time the Holy Spirit fills us. When all of our trespasses and sins are poured out, the Holy Spirit will fill our entire being. Then we will have the boldness to go door knocking.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is like breathing. Breathing is a continuous matter. If we hold our breath for three minutes, we will die. Hence, every time we go to visit people, we first have to pray. Even though we had prayed yesterday, for our going out today we still have to pray again and come before the Lord for His shining. We live in the world and are being defiled every day; thus, we need to be cleansed again and again. This may be likened to the washing of hands. Although I do not usually do the cleaning and try my best not to touch anything dirty, I still have to wash my hands seven to eight times a day. In the same way, no matter how thorough you prayed and confessed to the Lord yesterday, you still have to pray thoroughly today before you go out to visit people and bring the Lord to them. You cannot save this time. You must pay the price for this. If we are serious in this matter, we will realize that it is not enough to spend merely three to five minutes to do it.

Exercising To Speak Words of Wisdom

When we go door knocking, we have to pay attention to our attitude. We should never be reckless or hasty; rather, we should be polite, gentle,

respectful, solemn, and not casual. Moreover, we have to learn to speak concisely but not wordy, be affectionate and not be cold. If you are too wordy and mechanical, people may close their door and decline you immediately. Thus, we have to exercise to speak straightforwardly, directly, affectionately, and politely. If they answer, “I don’t have time,” you should not give up; instead, you should say, “It will take you just one minute.” At the end, he may be saved and baptized because of this one minute gospel preaching. It is because we have had this experience, so we have the one minute gospel preaching.

Learning To Grasp The Opportunity

One time I heard a saint testified that the person whom he visited said that his speaking was good. Then I told the brothers, at that moment he should have drawn a conclusion and asked him to pray together. Once he prays with him, he will believe and receive the Lord, then he should baptize him. If he does not grasp that opportunity and continues to talk further, the opportunity may slip away, and this “business” will not close the deal. But some brothers said, “We are afraid that it is too fast and is still a bit strange.” This means that it is not they who are not willing to pray, but it is you who are not willing to pray. It is not that they are not willing to put down their face, but it is you who are not willing to put down your face to lead the prayer. All these things are spoken from my experience. It is the same with me in the past. When I talked to a person to a critical juncture, I did not have the boldness to lead him to pray, thinking that it may be too early, and I should just let go. Once I let him go, I may not have the opportunity to see him again in my whole life.

Exercising to Continue Steadfastly

(We all) should practice door knocking and visiting people. This is the first item which we should practice. Perhaps we cannot go out for door knocking every day, but one thing we can do: we can spend two to three hours each week for door knocking. We should not only visit those whom we know but also those whom we do not know. We should knock on all the doors in the district in which we live. Do not worry or be anxious. As long as we are willing to do it, we will be successful. (Rising Up To Preach The Gospel, Ch. 5)

HOW TO USE THE MYSTERY OF THE HUMAN LIFE FOR THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

We need to go to preach the high gospel...Thousands have been saved through “The Mystery of Human Life” this booklet. In it is the central way to present people the high gospel starting from God’s creation of man. The parts of man are presented with a diagram of three circles showing man’s spirit, soul, and body. It unveils God’s intention to come into man’s spirit so that man as a container, a vessel, may contain God. This high gospel of God’s economy captures the thoughtful, educated people. After being educated, nearly every human being begins to think about the meaning of human life. Before the trainees presented the booklet, many said they were not interested. But the trainees said, “Just give us thirty seconds to read to you from The Mystery of Human Life.” This subject attracts people. After listening to the reading of the first page, many will say it is very good. When you hear “very good,” that means that person is a son of peace. When he says “{very good” or “not bad,” that is the time of you to say, “Let’s pray.” Then you can turn to the back of the booklet and lead him to pray and call upon the name of the Lord. Following this, read the portion in the back of the booklet on baptism and show him Mark 16:16—believe and be baptized. Then lead him to be baptized in his bathtub. Exercise the authority in heaven and on earth that has been given to you. Regardless of this person’s status, he will be a little lamb, going along with you to get changed and get into the water. In baptism we have a very prevailing prayer: “Lord, we place this one into You. We baptize him into the Triune God.” This is the way to get people baptized within fifteen minutes. (Being desperate and Living Uniquely for the Gospel, p.39)

APPENDIX—SOME PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTACTING PEOPLE

[We] should learn never to argue or debate with people. Argument and debate never work out anything. On the other hand, you should not agree with people too quickly nor should you agree with whatever they say. Otherwise, they may think that you are a “yes man.” You have to show people your carefulness. When you are not loose and careless, this will add weight to

your speaking. Otherwise, the other party may consider that your speaking is a light work with no gravity, no weight. (The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, p. 81)

In contacting people it is always a help to make appointments. But this does not mean that we should contact people only by making appointments. We should talk to people at any time. The Lord Himself is the factor, the reason, and the purpose for us to go out to contact people. He will honor our doing, and today He is the Spirit within us. When we go to contact people, we have to believe that the Lord is going with us. Our speaking is His speaking. We speak Him into people. We should never forget to minister Christ to others. We should never forget to pass on God, the living God, to people. Even if we just speak with someone for one minute, we should still minister Christ and pass on God to him.

One more critical thing for us to learn is the right time to ask someone to pray with us. This can be compared to cooking food. You have to know what time to stop cooking. Otherwise, what you cook can be spoiled by being either raw or overdone. All good cooks know when to stop their cooking. After one big gospel meeting, D.L. Moody contacted a person who was an unbeliever. At the critical moment of time when the person was about to pray, another person came in. It was raining outside and this person came in with an umbrella. A noise was made with the umbrella which distracted the other person. After that disturbance, the person would not pray to receive the Lord. This shows how important it is to pray with people at the right time.

You also have to learn not to spend your time in vain. When you contact people, you should always discern whether or not you should make this person a constant contact. To invite people to dinner is good, but you should not do this too quickly or too early. After a number of contacts you may realize that the time is ripe for you to invite someone to your house or for you to be invited by him. All of your contact with people should not be carried out in a light or loose way.

Furthermore, you should always pray for your contacts. Do not say that you do not have the time. Even if you are really busy, you can still pray while you are walking out the door, “Lord, help me today to meet the proper person.” As

you are driving to work you can continue to pray. This is the real prayer, not the routine prayer. Surely it is good to have a set time to pray, but praying while you are walking out the door or driving to work in your car may be even more effective. Wherever you are, you can pray. Remember all your contacts before the Lord, and pray for them. (The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, pp. 82-83)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, briefly explain why the believers have to preach the gospel.

2. What are the laws of an effective door knocking?

3. Briefly describe the main points of the four keys in The Mystery of Human Life.

4. What should we learn in the matter of contacting people?

LESSON FIVE

PRAYING BY EXERCISING THE SPIRIT

FOR THE POWERFUL IMPACT OF THE GOSPEL

Scripture Reading:

Rom. 10:14-15 How then shall they call upon Him into whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe into Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without one who proclaims Him? And how shall they proclaim Him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the news of good things!"

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Eph. 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit.

Matt. 12:28 But if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Hymn: 925

OUTLINE

I. Our preaching of the gospel must have the word and the Spirit—Rom. 10:14-15; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4:

Rom. 10:14 How then shall they call upon Him into whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe into Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without one who proclaims Him?

Rom. 10:15 And how shall they proclaim Him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the news of good things!"

Luke 24:49 And 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.

Acts 1:4 And as He met together with them, He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, You heard from Me.

A. The word carries the supply of life, and the spirit carries the power to heal and cast out demons—Acts 5:12-16, 16:18.

Acts 5:12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders took place among the people; and they were all with one accord in the portico of Solomon.

Acts 5:13 And none of the rest dared to join themselves to them, but the people magnified them.

Acts 5:14 And believers were all the more being added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

Acts 5:15 So that they even carried the sick out into the streets and placed them on cots and mats, in order that when Peter came, at least his shadow might overshadow some of them.

Acts 5:16 And the multitude from the cities surrounding Jerusalem also came together, carrying the sick and those troubled by unclean spirits, for such ones were all being healed.

Acts 16:18 And she did this for many days. But Paul was greatly disturbed; and turning, he said to the spirit, I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour.

B. In this way, our gospel will be powerful, and our work will be living and effective.

C. Pay attention to the filling of the Holy Spirit and pursue to be filled with the Holy Spirit every day.

II. Being filled with the consummated Spirit—Eph. 5:18:

Eph. 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit.

A. To be filled in spirit is to be filled with the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit who is the processed Triune God.

B. The Holy Spirit being the consummation of the Triune God.

C. This Spirit is the Spirit who becomes the blessing of the gospel—Gal. 3:14.

Gal. 3:14 In order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

III. To pray by exercising our spirit for the release of the Holy Spirit and participating in the outpouring of the Spirit of power:

A. To pray by exercising our spirit for releasing the Holy Spirit:

1. If we do not exercise our spirit, the Holy Spirit is locked and imprisoned inside our being.

2. When we exercise our spirit, that means we unlock the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit may be released.

B. The release of the Holy Spirit ushers us into the participation of the outpouring of the Spirit of power:

1. The outpouring of the Spirit of power is the power from on high and as the real dynamic impact.

2. The outpouring of the Spirit of power as the power from on high and also the dynamic impact is for preaching the gospel and ministering Christ to others.

C. The participation in the outpouring of the Spirit of power is based upon the Triune God as the essential Spirit:

1. The Spirit within is for our essence, the Spirit without is for God's economy.

2. The Spirit without is with us based upon the fact that He is the essential Spirit of life within us.

3. When we exercise our spirit, the essential Spirit will be released, and this will lead us to the enjoyment of the outpouring of the Spirit of power.

IV. The infilling of the Holy Spirit being a scientific way, the truth revealed in the Scriptures:

A. Pursuing the filling of the Holy Spirit to cast out the demons and heal diseases—Matt. 12:28; 1 Tim. 5:22.

Matt. 12:28 But if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

1 Tim. 5:22 Lay hands quickly on no man, nor participate in others' sins; keep yourself pure.

B. We do not want any speaking in tongues or any strange signs and wonders.

C. Continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer—Acts 1:14.

Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

REFERENCE

Vessels Useful to the Lord, Chs. 10-11; Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, Ch. 13.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

OUR PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL MUST HAVE THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

The New Testament reveals that in our preaching of the gospel, we must have the word (Rom. 10:14-15) and the spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). The word carries the supply of life, and the spirit carries the power to heal and cast out demons (Acts 5:12-16; 16:18). In this way, our gospel will be powerful, and our work will be living and effective. If you do not pursue the filling of the Holy Spirit, I am afraid that when you go out to baptize people, you drown them, and at the end, they neither meet nor pursue the Lord because they are all drowned by you. If you want to baptize people to make him alive, you need to baptize them not only in water but also in spirit. This means that when you baptize people, you have to lead them to be filled with the Holy Spirit, teach him to confess, to pray, and to open themselves to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is the first step of believing in the Lord. After that, we have to pursue to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and live and move by being filled with the Holy Spirit; this is the proper living of a baptized person. The key to be filled with the Holy Spirit is that we have to confess thoroughly, pray, and open ourselves to allow the Holy Spirit to fill us. In the past we focused on burying people in the dead water so that they may leave the world through the death of Christ, but we have not raise them up; so eventually, they are also dead in the spiritual matters, having neither “air” or “gas,” because they lack the Spirit. Now we must pay attention to the filling of the Holy Spirit, and we ourselves must be those who are filled. (Vessels useful to the Lord, Ch. 11)

BEING FILLED WITH THE CONSUMMATED SPIRIT

Today God had already created the heavens and the earth, become flesh, passed through the human living on the earth for thirty-three and a half years, passed through death, died on the cross in seven statuses, resurrected, ascended, and descended. Today He is on the throne, He is in us, and He is moving in the whole world. Hence, when we preach the gospel, we may tell people that the "Word" is near them, in their mouth and in their heart" (Rom. 10:8). The "Word" is Christ, and Christ is the Spirit. The Spirit is like air which is in our mouth and in us. Similarly, the Spirit is in our mouth and in us. Today our God is such a wonderful One: He is our Savior and our life, and He is the Spirit. We need to be filled with such a Spirit.

This Spirit is what Galatians 3:14 refers to as the Spirit of the blessing of the gospel. Today the gospel that we preach has a central blessing which is the Spirit; this blessing is what God had promised Abraham from the beginning (v. 8). Four thousand years ago, God had given Abraham a promised blessing; this blessing is the Triune God incarnated to be a seed of Abraham. In this seed shall all the nations be blessed (v. 16). How can the nations be blessed in this seed? It is through His human living, He went to the cross to accomplish an all-inclusive death which dealt with all the problems among men and all the problems between God and man, then in resurrection, He became the life-giving Spirit who is the consummation of the Triune God. The life-giving Spirit as the consummation of the Triune God moves on the earth that all men are blessed.

Now what we need is to be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says that we have to be filled in spirit. With what should we be filled? We should be filled with the Spirit, the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit who is the processed Triune God. How can we be filled? We can be filled through prayer and confession. Confession includes repentance. On the day of Pentecost, after the people heard the gospel and were touched, they asked Peter what should they do in order to be saved. Then Peter told them, "Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). This shows us that as long as we fulfill the principle of repenting, confessing, and dealing thoroughly with our sins, we will definitely receive the Holy Spirit. Just as we receive the Holy Spirit and are saved through repentance and confession, today we also

obtain the filling of the Holy Spirit through repentance and confession. (Vessels useful to the Lord, Ch. 10)

PRAY BY EXERCISING OUR SPIRIT FOR THE RELEASE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE PARTICIPATION IN THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT OF POWER

The release of the Spirit leads us to the outpouring of the Spirit. We need to pray by exercising our spirit for the release of the Holy Spirit. If we do not exercise our spirit, the Holy Spirit is locked and imprisoned inside our being. He has no way out because we have cheated Him. We believed in the Lord Jesus, we received the Spirit, and the Spirit came into us. But when the Spirit entered into us, He entered into a prison. We imprison Him all the time. Now we have to exercise our spirit to release Him. When we exercise our spirit, that means we unlock the Holy Spirit. Today the key is not with the Holy Spirit. The key is with us. With the Holy Spirit there is no problem. We need to pray by exercising our spirit so that the Holy Spirit may be released.

This is related to the participation in the outpouring of the Spirit of power. The Holy Spirit first is the essential Spirit, the Spirit of life. Second, the Holy Spirit is the outpoured Spirit as the economical Spirit of power. We need to participate in the outpouring of the Spirit of power as the power from on high and as the dynamic impact. The power from on high is the real dynamic impact, and this comes from exercising our spirit so that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life, the essential Spirit, can be released. The release of the Holy Spirit will usher us into the participation in the outpouring of the Spirit of power. The outpouring of the Spirit of power as the power from on high and as the dynamic impact is for preaching the gospel and ministering Christ to others.

We have to see that the one divine Spirit is of two sides: the inner side and the outer side, the essential side and the economical side. The essential side refers to the indwelling Spirit as our spiritual essence, our spiritual life, and our spiritual person. The Triune God Himself as the Spirit is the very essence and base of our spiritual life. Based upon this, we can go on to participate in the outpouring of the Spirit of power, who is the economical Spirit for God's

economy. The Spirit within is for our essence; the Spirit without is for God's economy. The Spirit without is with us based upon the fact that He is the essential Spirit of life within us. Since we are regenerated, we have the first aspect of the Spirit within us as a base. Based upon this, when we exercise our spirit, the essential Spirit will be released, and this will lead us to the enjoyment of the outpouring of the Spirit of power. This outpoured Spirit is the impact for our preaching and for our ministry.

Now that we have been regenerated, we need to realize that the Bible charges us to do one unique thing, that is, to pray. This is because to pray is to release the spirit. We may wonder what spirit we are releasing—the human spirit or the divine Spirit. My answer is this—when you release your human spirit, the divine Spirit is released, because these two spirits are no longer separate; they are one. "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). The divine Spirit and the human spirit are now altogether mingled as one spirit. (Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, pp. 119-121)

THE INFILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BEING A SCIENTIFIC WAY AND THE TRUTH REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES

Pursuing of the Filling of the Holy Spirit to Cast Out the Demons and Heal Diseases

When you go out, you have to cast out all the demons. Do not hesitate. Hesitation is a sign of lack of faith. Even though you feel that you do not have faith, you have to pray immediately to ask the Lord for faith, then cast out demons in the Lord's name. In Matthew 12:28, the Lord Jesus said, "But if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Here it mentions two matters: the casting out of demons by the Holy Spirit and the coming of the kingdom of God by casting out demons. Hence, whether you go to the campuses or community today, or to villages in the future, you have to cast out demons by the Holy Spirit to bring in the

kingdom of God. This requires you to be filled with the Holy Spirit in your daily life.

It is relatively easy to cast out demons, but it is not that easy to heal diseases. Demons are easy to be dealt with. Once you apply the Lord's precious blood, you are covered, and the demons are cast out in the Lord's name. But you may not be able to heal a disease in one time. If a person asks you to lay hands on him, you cannot reject him, but you have to lay hands on him and pray for him that the Lord will heal him. However, you should not quickly lay hands on everyone who is sick. Paul said, "Lay hands quickly on no man" (1 Tim. 5:22). If you do this, you are looking for trouble. We have to cast out all the demons, but we may not have to heal everyone; we lay our hands only if the patient requests. It requires the pursuing of the filling of the Holy Spirit to cast out the demons and heal diseases.

We Do Not Want Any Speaking in Tongues or Any Strange Signs and Wonders

We do not want any speaking in tongues or any strange signs and wonders. People in the Pentecostal movement have mistakenly done these things, but now they gradually give them up. The filling of the Holy Spirit is a scientific way; it is the truth revealed in the Scriptures. Today when you go out to preach the gospel, you have to be filled with the Holy Spirit, then you have to cast out demons and heal diseases. This is a law. In the past we preach the gospel for many years, but we focus merely on the speaking and not too much on the filling of the Holy Spirit, healing, or casting out demons. The preaching of the gospel requires speaking, but the spirit with the power of casting out demons and healing must also be in the speaking. This is the power of the gospel. Such a gospel is a powerful gospel. (Vessels useful to the Lord, Ch. 11)

Continuing Steadfastly in Prayer with One Accord

Acts 1:14 reveals that the one hundred twenty continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer. This is not the private prayer, the individual prayer, but the corporate prayer. In our corporate prayer, we need the one accord.

Acts 2:42 tells us that the early church continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. We should not think that prayer is the smallest item here since it is mentioned last. Actually, the last item is the conclusion, and the conclusion is the most important part.... In doing everything we need a conclusion. The prayer is the spiritual conclusion to our entire spiritual career. To our life, to our work, to everything within us, and to everything outside of us, the prayer is the conclusion. Thus, we have to continue steadfastly in this concluding prayer.

Acts 6:4 tells us that the apostles made the decision to continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word. Here prayer is mentioned first. In Acts 2:42 prayer is at the end. Therefore, the prayer is both the ending and the beginning. It is bother the conclusion and the start. We have to continue steadfastly in prayer. (Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, p.121)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, briefly explain why we must have both the word and the spirit in our preaching of the gospel.

2. According to the Bible, briefly explain why we need to be filled with the consummated Spirit.

3. Why do we need to exercise our spirit to pray in order to release the Holy Spirit and participate in the outpouring of the Spirit of power?

4. According to the Bible, prove why the filling of the Holy Spirit is a scientific way and the truth revealed in the Scriptures.

LESSON SIX

THE PRINCIPLES OF HELPING THE NEW ONES

Scripture Reading:

1 Pet. 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation.

Eph. 2:4-5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

1 Thes. 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.

Hymn: The proper story of God and man—Experience of God—In the Spirit

OUTLINE

I. Contacting people with the spirit to enliven their spirit:

A. The key point in our bringing people to salvation is to help them to make the "connection" with the Lord that they may be quicken by the Lord within.

B. When we go to the home meetings, we have to touch others' spirits, open them up and enliven their spirits.

C. We have to help others according to this principle. This is what we mean by feeding:

1. Our going to home meetings is on the basis of the experience of life which we have after salvation.

2. Corresponding to the word of the truth in the Bible, to render a proper feeding to the new ones.

II. Love prevails:

A. God is love; we love because He first loved us—1 John 4:8, 19.

1 John 4:8 He who does not love has not known God, because God is love.

1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.

B. The spirit that God has given us is a Spirit of love, hence, it is of power and of sobermindedness—2 Tim. 1:7.

2 Tim. 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.

C. Love being the most excellent way—1 Cor. 12:31b:

1 Cor. 12:31b …And moreover I show to you a most excellent way.

1. The church is not a police station to arrest people or a law court to judge people.

2. The church is a home to raise up the believers, a hospital to heal and a school to teach people.

III. Feeding the newborn babes with baby food:

A. Realizing that the new ones are babes in Christ.

B. Learning to feed the newborn babes.

C. Not stumbling the newborn babes.

IV. Learning to care for the home meetings in a flexible way:

A. Feeding the new believers in the home meetings.

B. Grasping every opportunity to feed the new believers.

C. Spending our in a wise manner in caring for the new believers.

D. Preparing for the home meetings.

E. Caring for the home meetings according to its atmosphere.

F. Caring for the home meetings in a living, inspiring, and unveiling way.

G. Learning to use the words of the new believers in a positive way.

H. Dealing with problems in the home meetings.

I. Learning to care for the home meetings according to a definite goal.

J. Learning to care for people being a lifelong matter.

V. Long-term faithfulness, laboring and struggling—Col. 1:28-29:

Col. 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;

Col. 1:29 For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which

operates in me in power.

A. The growth of life needs a certain amount of time, proper and adequate labor with a sufficient amount of patience—1 Cor. 3:6.

1 Cor. 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.

B. God-ordained way is a way of constant and persistent laboring and struggling—Col. 1:29.

Col. 1:29 For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.

REFERENCE

The Exercise and Practice of God's Ordained Way, Msg. 19-20; Msg. in Preparation for the Spread of the Gospel, Msg. 5; The Vital Groups, Msg. 8; Msg. to trainees in Fall 1990, Msg. 14.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

CONTACTING PEOPLE WITH SPIRIT, ENLIVEN THEIR SPIRIT

Every time we meet with the newly baptized brothers and sisters, we have to touch their spirits. We should render them help according to this point. The Life Lessons can be used as a means, but they cannot be applied in a rigid way. We have to consider carefully if a point or a passage will touch others' spirits or not. If others' spirits are touched, we have to give them some further enlightening and revelation. After a person is saved, we have to have long conversations with him. During the conversation you have to tell him, "We have a spirit within us. The Lord has died on the cross for us to be our Savior. He has resurrected from the dead to become a life-giving Spirit to live in our spirit. These two spirits are now mingled to become one spirit." You must explain to him this crucial point. At the beginning he may be listening with his mind. But after you talk for a while, he will be led to touch his spirit. This kind of fellowship must also be based on your experience. If you have no experience of touching the Spirit, you will not be able to do this. But if you

have this experience, he will understand immediately after you explain to him. Based on this principle, when we go to the home meetings, we have to touch others' spirits. We must open them up and enliven their spirits.

Following this, we must open them up further by telling them that we need to call on the Lord and to pray. To pray is not just to beg the Lord to do something for us. Prayer is a kind of calling on the Lord Jesus. This kind of calling is not just from our mouth but from the depth of our being, our spirit. Our spirit is the source of our calling on the Lord. We have to call from our spirit, "O Lord Jesus!" in this way, we will have a certain sensation; we will feel different within. In this calling we touch our spirit, and we exercise our spirit.

After a few days, you should go see them again to ask if they have called on the Lord and if they have had any feeling after calling on Him. Then you should go on to touch their living. Take for example the playing of mah-jong. You can ask if they liked mah-jong playing before they were saved. What is their experience now after they are saved? If they say that the interest seems to have waned, you should ask them why this is so. If they say that they do not know, you should tell them that when they call on the Lord all the time, the Lord gives them the proper feeling that takes away their love for the game of mah-jong. This is not all. The more they call on the Lord, the more the Lord will touch them about the game. They will feel sinful and filthy when they touch the game again. We have to help others according to this principle. This is what we mean by feeding. When we go to home meetings, the only way to render a proper feeding to the new ones is to do it on the basis of the experience of life which we have after salvation, corresponding to the word of the truth in the Bible. (Messages in Preparation for the Spread of the Gospel, pp. 55-56)

LOVE PREVAILS

The end of 1 Corinthians 12 reveals that love is the most excellent way (v. 31b). How can one be an elder? Love is the most excellent way. How can one be a co-worker? Love is the most excellent way. How do we shepherd people? Love is the most excellent way. Love is the most excellent way for us to

prophesy and to teach others. Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything or do anything.

Love prevails. We should love everybody, even our enemies. If the co-workers and elders do not love the bad ones, eventually they will have nothing to do. We must be perfect as our Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48) by loving the evil ones and the good ones without any discrimination. We must be perfect as our Father because we are His sons, His species. This is most crucial. How can we be a co-worker and an elder? It is by love is every way. We must love any kind of person. The Lord Jesus said that He came to be a physician, not for the healthy ones, but for the sick ones. The Lord said, "Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who are ill" (Matt. 9:12).

The church is not a police station to arrest people or a law court to judge people, but a home to raise up the believers. Parents know that the worse their children are, the more they need their raising up. If our children were angels, they would not need our parenting to raise them up. The church is a loving home to raise up the children. The church is also a hospital to heal and to recover the sick ones. Finally, the church is a school to teach and edify the unlearned ones who do not have much understanding. Because the church is a home, a hospital, and a school, the co-workers and elders should be one with the Lord to raise up, to heal, to cover, and to teach others in love. (The Vital Groups, pp. 74-75)

FEEDING THE NEWBORN BABES WITH BABY FOOD

Realizing that the New Ones are Babes in Christ

You must try to treat these newly baptized ones as nursing mothers treat their babes. This is one of the secrets of how to practice the God-ordained way, but it is a hard lesson to learn. You must learn to always have a subjective realization concerning every new believer, considering that they are babes. If you teach kindergarten, you realize that these students are little children, and you treat them accordingly. If you teach graduate school, you realize that these students are all college graduates. To treat them like little children

would be wrong. You must have a proper little children would be wrong. You must have a proper psychological understanding.

The primary point, the prerequisite, is that you consider a newly baptized one as a babe in Christ. A new one may ask, "What is the Bible?" This may not sound like babyish question, but you must answer as you would answer a baby; you must have this kind of concept. You must say the right words, and your attitude and tone must also be right. A new one may ask many questions, yet you must always have the concept that you are dealing with a babe in Christ. If you can learn this secret, you will be welcomed by every new one. They would like to hear your talk. In this way you can open the way to feed them. Sometimes after a meeting, I went over to see how the saints were talking to the newcomers. Many times the saints' expression and tone were wrong in talking with these ones. You must speak something that will help a new one to open to you. He will open by saying something. Right away, you may realize that he has been newly saved. Then you have to talk to him by considering him as a babe. If you have learned this secret, after only two or three sentences, you will be warmly welcomed by him. He will open himself up to you, listen to you, and take your word. He will become very interested in whatever you say.

Learning to Feed the Newborn Babes

We all must go forth, bear fruit, and our fruit should remain. How do we preserve our fruit so that it will remain? The answer is in John 21:15: "Feed My lambs." If we love the Lord, we are charged to feed His lambs. Every proper mother knows how to feed her newborn babe. Peter was charged by the Lord in John 21 to feed the lambs. Then later, in chapter two of his first Epistle, he wrote to all the new ones: "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word" (v. 2). Newborn babes cannot feed themselves; they need nursing mother to feed them. We must be the feeding ones. We can bear fruit and have our fruit remain by learning to feed.

Sometimes a new one would not open himself to you; he would not say anything. He would welcome you into his home and would sit with you until you speak something, but he would not say anything. What should you do?

Again, you must try to talk to him as to a babe. You may ask, “Shall we sing a song?” Surely he would be very agreeable to this. You may ask, “Do you have a song?” He might have one. This is a start, and this is to talk as to a little babe. Never forget that the new one is a spiritual babe. According to Peter, the newborn babes need milk, yet they do not know how to drink, is to feed him. When you go to hold a home meeting with the little babes, you must have the proper attitude. You must have the attitude that you are coming to “play” with these little babes. You must learn this. You may even sing a simple children’s song with them. You must learn that regardless of the new ones’ age, position, or social status, they are babes. (The Exercise and Practice of the God-Ordained Way, pp. 171-174)

Not Stumbling the Newborn Babes

[In the matter of helping the new believers,] do not think that the matter of idols is an easy item to handle. This is a very difficult matter. A number of the newly saved ones have been stumbled by this matter. When you feed them in many other matters they would accept it, but when you come to the matter of idols, they might not accept your word. This is especially true with the Chinese concerning the worship of their ancestors. Many would not forsake this practice, so it is hard to know how to answer them. Of course, we cannot say that it is all right, yet if we condemn this in the wrong manner, we will lose them. Therefore, you must remember that this one is only a babe. He knows many things, yet he knows nothing concerning the Lord. You must learn to “play” with him in your conversation. While you are talking to him as to a babe, you have to look to the Lord for the wisdom to handle the situation without stumbling him. Eventually, you will be able to convince him, but not like a professor convincing a student. That kind of attitude can never work out anything. You must hold the attitude that you are talking to a babe.

Another difficult item is the matter of making restitution for past transgressions. We all did things that were wrong in the past. We all wronged others. Sometimes we wronged others financially in material things. After a new one has been saved, they will sooner or later encounter this problem. We must be very careful not to bring up this problem too soon. In the New Testament, there is no teaching that charges us to tell the newly saved ones to

clear their past. To do this is wrong. The Lord's dynamic salvation will work out this result. Zaccheus was saved, and immediately he told the Lord, "Behold, the half of my possessions, Lord, I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusations, I restore four times as much" (Luke 19:8). This was a dynamic reaction to the Lord's dynamic salvation. It was not the result of any teaching.

Another difficult question is regarding the matter of marriage. Today on this earth there are a lot of illegal marriages. Young men and young women live together as husband and wife, yet they were never married. Are they husband and wife or not? You may have a new one a young lady, who was saved in a marvelous way, yet she lives with a young man without being married. They may even have a child. Eventually, this question concerning marriage will be brought up. Are the two of them husband and wife? What would you say? If you say "no," you will stumble them, but you cannot tell them that this is not a problem, because this is a big problem.

One secret you have to learn and always remember is that you are dealing with babes. I was there with one husband and four wives; all five were babes. On the one hand, I was "playing" with them, but on the other hand, I was really helping them. My visit did not stumble or damage them. If I had been careless and had been like a preacher, a pastor, or a Bible teacher, I surely would have damaged them. Just by my one visit, all five would have been stumbled. Therefore, learn to hold home meetings always with the realization that you are dealing with babes. This will safeguard you, and this will open the way for you to render the proper help to them. Do not forget that the new ones were deeply fallen sinners, so it is not so easy for us to rescue them out of their fallen situation and condition in a quick way. Some are not so complicated, but many cases are really complicated. (pp. 175-177)

LEARNING TO CARE FOR THE HOME MEETINGS IN A FLEXIBLE WAY

Before visiting the new ones in the home meetings, some time should be given for preparation. In that time of preparation, there should be some fellowship ...concerning the goal of the home meeting. You should not go to

the home meetings without a definite purpose. Of course, you should not make your purpose a legality, without any flexibility. However, regardless of how flexible you are, you must have a purpose with a goal.

Whatever we do in all kinds of meetings must be living, stirring, and something the Spirit can use to inspire and unveil something to people concerning the mystery of God. We should do nothing merely as a religious activity. To help people to be revived or to love the Bible can also be a religious activity which is common in Christianity. This kind of work is very general. But to read and sing a hymn such as #537 in Hymns concerning Christ being so subjective would impress a new believer in a particular way. To stress that Christ is subjective is something really new to Christians in Christianity. Christ is not only a historical person who is merely objective; rather, the Christ who is our Savior is so subjective. To help a new one with such a particular subject is to care for the home meetings in a living, stirring, and unveiling way, free from any religion.

The new way is something living and altogether outside of religion. The new way is unveiling, revealing, and inspiring. The new way is not a work in the style or form of any type of religion. It is something altogether in the reality of life. When you minister Christ, stressing His being subjective, not only will the new one receive some help, but also those who are taking care of the home meeting with you will receive some help. (pp. 182-184)

For many years in the churches, we have suffered loss for two reasons. We did not feed people in home meetings, and we did not know how to feed people. In the past someone may have been baptized, and we may have had the burden to visit him; but after several visits, we lost interest because we did not know what to do, and there was little result. Likewise, the new believer we visited had little interest in continuing to receive our visits. We all must learn to do the work of home meetings to nourish the new believers with baby food.

From 1940 to 1943 in the church in Cheefoo, I began to learn how to visit the homes and how to take care of new believers. Now I am just opening some doors for you to learn as much as you can. In this training, I am simply opening the doors and giving directions for you to go and learn more. Gradually, day after day, as we take care of two or three new believers

year-round, we will bear two or three remaining fruit yearly into the church life. In the course of our lifetime, we may bring one hundred to one hundred fifty into the church life. Be assured that when we enter into the eternal tabernacles (Luke 16:9), these one hundred to one hundred fifty will welcome us. What a wonderful life this is! Doing the work of nourishing the believers in the home meetings builds the church and helps us to know what it means to be built up with others. (The Exercise and Practice of God's-Ordained Way, p. 188)

LONG-TERM FAITHFULNESS, LABORING AND STRUGGLING

The spreading of life needs a certain amount of time and labor. If you do not till the ground, sow the seed, water, and add fertilizer, the seeds may not grow well. You cannot just sow the seed, go home to sleep, and expect that the seeds will grow properly. In a sense, the seeds grow on their own, but in another sense, there is still the need of proper care, fertilizing, and watering. Paul said, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God made to grow" (1 Cor. 3:6). Thus, there is the need of proper, adequate labor with a sufficient amount of patience.

In Colossians 1:28 Paul said, "Whom we announce, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man full-grown in Christ." We must announce Christ to the sinners. Then we must present them as matured believers to Christ. We sow the seed and take care of the seed until it grows unto maturity. Paul continued by saying, "For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operated in me in power" (v. 29). In this verse the word "struggling" means to fight, to wrestle. It is a word used in the sense of the Olympic games in which the participants had to struggle in competition. Paul used this word to describe our labor in the gospel. We in the Lord's recovery should be laborers and strugglers. Anything that needs labor or struggling will not go very fast or grow very fast. (Messages to Trainees in Fall 1990, p. 97)

QUESTIONS

1. Briefly explain what are the principles in helping the new ones?

2. According to the Bible, prove that love is the most prevailing way in helping the new ones.

3. How do we take care of the home meetings in a flexible way?

4. Briefly explain how we can help the new ones to grow in life.

LESSON SEVEN

THE BASIC KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF THE NEW BELIEVERS (1)— MINGLED SPIRIT AND CALLING UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD

Scripture Reading:

1 Cor. 15:45b …the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
1 Cor. 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
Rom. 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;
Rom. 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Hymn: 255

OUTLINE

I. The Christian living is in spirit:

A. The origin of our spirit is God; the spirit of man was created by God, to complete God's purpose in the creation of heaven and the earth—John 4:24; Zech. 12:1b.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.
Zech. 12:1b …Thus declares Jehovah, who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him,

B. Our spirit is a vessel, to contact and contain God—Gen. 1:26, 2:7.

Gen. 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.
Gen. 2:7 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.

C. Christ has become the life-giving Spirit, as our life and life supply

from within our spirit—1 Cor., 15:45b, 6:17, 2 Tim. 1:6-7.

1 Cor. 15:45b …the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

1 Cor. 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

2 Tim. 1:6 For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Tim. 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.

II. We need to exercise our spirit, building up a life of calling on the name of the Lord:

A. Calling on the name of the Lord is the way to enjoy the Lord—1 Cor. 1:2, Rom. 10:12b.

1 Cor. 1:2b …all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:

Rom. 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;

B. Calling on the name of the Lord is to use our spirit to pray—our spiritual deep breathing—1 Thes. 5:16-19.

1 Thes. 5:16 Always rejoice,

1 Thes. 5:17 Unceasingly pray,

1 Thes. 5:18 In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thes. 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit;

C. Calling on the name of the Lord everyday, walking in spirit—2 Tim. 2:22, Rom. 10:12b-13.

2 Tim. 2:22 But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Rom. 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;

Rom. 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

REFERENCE

Spiritual Reality, Msgs. 1, 5; The Spirit and Our Spirit, Ch. 1; The Lord's Recovery of Eating, Ch. 2; Basic Lessons on Life, Lsn. 2; The Subjective Experience of the Indwelling Christ, Chs. 1,4; Life-Study of Acts, Msgs. 14, 61,

64; Calling on the Name of the Lord; Life-Study of Galatians, Msgs. 39, 43; Life-Study of Philippians, Msgs. 34

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE CHRISTIAN LIVING IS IN SPIRIT

The Spirit of Man Was Created by God, to Complete God's Purpose in the Creation of Heaven and Earth

The spirit of man was created by God, in a particular sense, to complete God's purpose in the creation of the heavens and the earth (Zech. 12:1; Isa. 42:5; Job 32:8). Zechariah 12:1 says that God stretched forth the heavens, laid the foundation of the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him. Zechariah put these three things together: the heavens, the earth, and the spirit of man. The heavens are for the earth, the earth is for man, and man has a spirit for God. Thus, man is the center of God's creation, and the center of man is his spirit (The Spirit and Our Spirit, Ch. 1)

In the eyes of God there are three great things in this universe: the heavens, the earth, and man. In the universe God pays attention to the heavens, the earth, and the spirit of man. Therefore, do not despise yourself. You have a spirit within you, and your spirit is ranked with the heavens and the earth. God needs the heavens and the earth, and even more He needs your spirit. If we see how important our human spirit is, we will be very excited.

Why does God consider the human spirit as important as the heavens and the earth? It is because the human spirit is a vessel to contain God. The heavens are for the earth. Without the heavens, the earth could not survive. The things we enjoy on earth, such as sunshine and rain, come from the heavens. Furthermore, the earth is for man. Things brought forth by the earth, such as crops, are suitable to meet man's needs for his survival. But the most precious thing in man is his spirit. The human spirit is for God; it is used to contain God. The heavens are for the earth, the earth is for man, and man is for God.

Man has a spirit. Many people, including even Christians, do not know that there is a spirit in them. ...(But) What is the spirit? Where is the spirit? This is hard to explain. It is even difficult to know our heart. How many hearts do we have? We have a biological heart and a psychological heart. Not only is God a mystery, but even you and I are mysteries. Some of the most precious things are very mysterious. For example, electricity, life, and atomic energy are mysterious and even invisible, yet they are real. Within us the most mysterious thing is the spirit. (The Lord's Recovery of Eating, Ch. 2)

Our spirit is a vessel, to contact and contain God

The Bible also reveals to us that it pleases God to mingle Himself with man. This is God's purpose in creating man. Genesis tells us that God created man in His image and according to His likeness (1:26) ...The reason God created man exactly the same as He is is so that He may put Himself into man. However, the process through which God puts Himself into man is not that simple, because God is too mysterious. God as Spirit cannot put Himself into man, unless man has a spirit. Thus, the Bible tells us that when God created man, He not only created man in His image, but He also created a spirit in man (2:7; Zech. 12:1). How wonderful this is! God Himself is the uncreated, eternal Spirit, and in order for this uncreated, eternal Spirit to come into man, God created a spirit for man. (Spiritual Reality, Ch. 1)

Man's spirit is a vessel to contain God and an organ to contact Him (2 Tim. 4:22; John 4:24). The human spirit receives the Spirit of God and interacts with His Spirit, and the two become one (Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17). Man's contact and relationship with God are altogether not in the mind, emotion, or will but in the spirit. The Lord Jesus told us that God is Spirit and that those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness (John 4:24). ...Because God is Spirit, we must contact Him in spirit. (Ch. 5)

In Romans 9:21 and 23 Paul told us that God's creation of man was just to produce, to create, man as a vessel to fulfill God's purpose. God created man as a vessel to contain Him just as a potter makes a vessel of clay to contain something. Second Corinthians 4:7 also conveys this thought. The apostle Paul considered himself as an earthen vessel to contain a treasure, and the

treasure is just Christ, the very God. Thus, in Romans 9 and 2 Corinthians 4 we can see a clear revelation that man was created by God to be His vessel to contain Him. (Basic Lessons on Life, Lsn. 2)

Based upon Genesis 1:27, Paul wrote Romans 9:21. He realized that in the beginning God created man with clay and that this man of clay is a vessel. However, this vessel is not for containing milk or water but the God of glory. Hence, in Romans 9:23 Paul said, "In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory." ...We are earthen vessels to contain God. When God comes into us, we become vessels of glory. Man was created by God to contain God. This concept cannot be found in any other book. Besides the Bible, there is no other book in the world that has such a record. (The Subjective Experience of the Indwelling Christ, Ch. 4)

Christ has become the life-giving Spirit, as our life and life supply from within our spirit

In order to be our life Christ had to become the Spirit, and indeed He has become the Spirit. "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45b). Jesus became flesh, lived on the earth for thirty-three and a half years, died on the cross, and resurrected; in resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit. ...Today Christ is the Spirit, and within us we also have a spirit; therefore, we can experience Him. The two spirits—the Lord's Spirit and our spirit—are mingled and have fellowship with one another. This may be compared to metal conducting electricity. If we sin, an insulation comes between us and the Lord and then the "electricity" cannot pass through. At such a time we need to open up to Him in our spirit to repent and confess our sins. In this way the barrier of sin is removed; immediately we can have fellowship with the Lord Spirit and once again experience His salvation within us. Then the Lord Jesus is no longer a doctrine to us but a reality. As the Spirit, He now indwells our spirit so that we can daily experience Him as our salvation. (Ch. 1)

WE NEED TO EXERCISE OUR SPIRIT, BUILDING UP A LIFE OF CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

Calling on the name of the Lord is the way to enjoy the Lord

Paul told Timothy to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22). Here we see that calling on the name of the Lord has a definite place in the carrying out of the New Testament economy of God. For the carrying out of God's New Testament economy, we need to call on the name of the Lord continually. Not only should we ourselves call individually; we should also call on Him with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (Life-Study of Acts, Msg. 64)

Calling on the Lord is a biblical practice; it certainly is not something invented by us. Calling on the name of the Lord is not a new practice in the New Testament. It began with Enosh, the third generation of mankind (Gen. 4:26) and was continued by many others.

If we read the Old Testament from Genesis 4 to Isaiah 12, we shall find out the way to call on the Lord. Isaiah, in particular, indicates that we need to call on the Lord joyfully: "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon His name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted" (Isa. 12:3-4). We draw water out of the wells of salvation by joyfully calling on the name of the Lord.

The Greek word for "call" in (Acts) 2:21 is...to call out audibly, even loudly, as Stephen did (7:59-60). From this we see that to call on the name of the Lord is to call on Him audibly. This is not a teaching or practice invented by us; it is a scriptural fact. If you study the lengthy note on calling in the Recovery Version, you will see how scriptural this practice is. Calling on the Lord is fully grounded on the revelation in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. ...This is a fact in the Word and in our experience, and I encourage you to try it. (Msg. 14)

Calling on the Lord is a reality, for when we call on Him we touch Him. In a verse related to this calling Paul says: "The word is near you, in your mouth" (Rom. 10:8). In a very practical sense, the word here is equal to the Lord. Thus, for the word to be near means that the Lord is near. Whenever we call on the name of the Lord, we experience His nearness, His intimate presence.

How do we know that the Lord is near us? We know this by calling on the Lord. You cannot convince someone that the Lord is near him by arguing or debating with him. The more we argue, the farther away the Lord may seem to be. But if instead of arguing we call on His name a few times, we shall sense that He is near. If we continue calling on Him, we shall realize that He is not only near but even within us. The more we call on the Lord, the more He becomes our enjoyment. Through calling on Him He also becomes our peace, rest, comfort, and solution in all kinds of situations. This is not a mere doctrine or superficial teaching; this is a truth for our experience. (Msg. 61)

Calling on the name of the Lord is not merely a doctrine. It is very practical. We need to practice it daily and hourly. We should never stop our spiritual breathing. We hope that many more of the Lord's people, especially new believers, will begin the practice of calling on the Lord. Today, many Christians have found that they can know Him, that they can be brought into the power of His resurrection, that they can experience His spontaneous salvation, and that they can walk in oneness with Him by calling on His name. In any situation, at any time, call: "Lord Jesus, O Lord Jesus!" If you practice calling on His name, you will see that it is a wonderful way to enjoy the Lord's riches. (Calling On the Name of the Lord, the Need of Practice)

Calling on the name of the Lord
is to use our spirit to pray—
our spiritual deep breathing

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Paul charges us to pray without ceasing....Although we may eat several meals a day and although we may drink many times during the day, no one can eat and drink without ceasing. But we certainly breathe unceasingly. Paul's command to pray without ceasing implies that unceasing prayer is like breathing. But how can our prayer become our spiritual breathing? How can we turn prayer into breathing? The way to do this is to call on the name of the Lord. We need to call on the Lord Jesus continually. This is the way to breathe, to pray without ceasing. Because we are not accustomed to this, we need to practice calling on the Lord's name all the time. To live is to breathe. Spiritually speaking, to breathe is to call on the

Lord's name and to pray. By calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, we breathe the Spirit.

After Paul charges us to pray without ceasing and to give thanks in everything, he tells us not to quench the Spirit (1 Thes. 5:19). This indicates that if we do not pray and give thanks, we quench the Spirit. To stop praying is to stop breathing. Thus, to quench the Spirit is to cease from breathing.

Just as we must breathe in order to live physically, we must breathe spiritually in order to live Christ. The way to breathe spiritually is to call on the name of the Lord. ...To live Christ is to call on Him continually. It is not sufficient simply to pray several times during the day, in the morning, in the afternoon, and at night. If we pray at these times but do not call on the Lord continually, we shall quench the Spirit. All day long, no matter where we are or what we are doing, we need to call on the Lord. Whatever we are doing, we should call on the Lord Jesus.

To pray without ceasing by calling on the Lord's name is to live Him. By calling on the Lord, we ...spontaneously live Him. If we pray, we shall not do things by ourselves, apart from Christ. Instead, by praying without ceasing, we shall live Christ. (Life-Study of Philippians, Msg. 34)

Prayer is spiritual breathing. As we all know, we must breathe in order to stay alive. Wherever we may be, we can breathe spiritually by calling on the Lord's name. All day long, no matter what we are doing, we can contact the Lord by breathing His name. As we are going through our early morning routine, we can call on the Lord Jesus. We may find that as we are taking care of practical matters, we have thirty minutes to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. If we practice, we shall build up the habit of calling on the name of the Lord. (Life-Study of Galatians, Msg. 39)

Calling on the name of the Lord everyday, walking in spirit

We may enjoy the Lord in our spirit simply by calling on His name....Like breathing, calling on the name of the Lord is a simple matter. But just as we cannot stay alive if we "graduate" from breathing, so we cannot live spiritually if we stop calling on the name of the Lord. Often the most needful things in

life are the most simple. What is more necessary to maintain life than breathing? Yet, breathing is so simple. In contrast to cooking, it does not require a great deal of labor. Likewise, how simple it is to call on the name of the Lord Jesus!...Oh, how we need to call on the Lord Jesus that we may enjoy Him as our grace and ...walk by the Spirit! I encourage you to breathe spiritually by calling on the Lord Jesus. By calling on the Lord we enjoy Him. Let us, then, walk by the Spirit in the enjoyment of Christ in our spirit. (Msg. 43)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the scriptural basis of the origin of our spirit, our spirit is a vessel to contain God and Christ is the life-giving Spirit, explain that the Christian Living is in spirit.

2. According to the Bible, explain that building up a life of calling on the name of the Lord is a practical way of exercising our spirit.

3. How do we build up a life of calling on the name of the Lord?

LESSON EIGHT

THE BASIC KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF THE NEW BELIEVERS (2)— THE WORDS OF LIFE AND PRAY-READING LORD'S WORDS

Scripture Reading:

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

Eph. 6:17-18a And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, By means of all prayer and petition…

Hymn: 814

OUTLINE

I. The Bible as the word of life is the definition, explanation, and expression of God—John 1:1-4:

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

John 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not one thing came into being which has come into being.

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

A. The Bible is God's word, being God's breathing out—2 Tim. 3:16.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

B. The Bible is God's word, being our food of life—Matt. 4:4; 1 Pet. 2:2.

Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."

1 Pet.2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation,

C. The Bible is God's word, being spirit and life—John 6:63.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

II. We need to receive and enjoy the word of life by pray-reading the Lord's word—Eph. 6:17-18a.

A. Touching God Himself by pray-reading the Lord's word—Eph. 6:17-18a.

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,

Eph. 6:18a By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit…

B. Enjoying God as food by pray-reading the Lord's word—Isa. 55:2b; Gen. 2:7.

Isa. 55:2b …Hear Me attentively, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Rev. 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

C. How to pray-read the word of God—Eph. 6:17-18a.

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,

Eph. 6:18a By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit…

REFERENCE

Life-Study of John, Ch. 2; How to Enjoy God and How to Practice the Enjoyment of God, Ch. 6, 13-14; On knowing the Bible, Ch. 1; Truth Lessons, level one, book one, Lsn. 1; The full knowledge of the word of God, Ch. 1-2; How to enjoy the spiritual food, Ch. 2; How to study the Bible, Ch. 1; Life-Study of Philippians, Ch. 35; Life Lessons, Vol. 1, Lsn. 6; Pray-Reading the Word.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE BIBLE BEING THE WORD OF LIFE AS THE DEFINITION, EXPLANATION, AND EXPRESSION OF GOD

The Word is the definition, explanation, and expression of God; hence, it is God defined, explained, and expressed. God is mysterious. He needs the Word to express Him. If you want to appear mysterious, the best way to do it is to be silent, for the more silent you are, the more mysterious you become. However, the more you talk, the more you expose yourself. All that is deep within you is revealed by your words. This is the meaning of the Word. Although God is a mystery, Christ as the Word of God defines, explains, and expresses Him. Thus, this Word is the definition, explanation, and expression of God. Eventually, this Word is God Himself, not God hidden, concealed, and mysterious, but God defined, explained, and expressed. The Word is not the invisible God, but eh very God who is visible. In the beginning this Word was with God; it was not separate from God, but always had God in Him. (Life-study of John, p. 20)

The entire Bible, from the first word to the last, is the Word of God, the expression of God, through which God breathed Himself out. The Word of God is God Himself. Hence, John 1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....” There is life, nutrient, and supply in Him as the Word. God puts Himself in the Word, so that by receiving the Word, man may receive all that God is. (How to Enjoy God and How to Practice the Enjoyment of God, Ch. 13)

The Bible is God’s words. First, these words explain God Himself. All words are for explanation and expression. The words of the Bible are for the expression and explanation of God Himself. If one does not read or understand the Bible, he will not understand or know God. For example, today, if you do not understand Chinese, you will not know me as a person. You may hear my voice, but you will not know what I am expressing. The

Bible as God's word firstly explains and expresses God Himself. (On Knowing Bible, p. 17)

The Bible is God's word, being God's breathing out

The Bible is the word of God. It is not only the breathing out of God, but is God Himself breathed into the word. Thus, there is the element of God in this breathing out. Once you touch this breathing, you touch the element of God. For this reason, many times when we read the Bible, not only do we feel the presence of God but we feel that we contact and touch God within. (p. 20)

The Scripture did not come out of man's thought, man's mind, but rather, it is God's breathing His thought and His word through His Spirit into and out of the writers. Hence, the Bible contains God's elements and carries His flavor. As Christians, our greatest joy, or shall we say, our greatest blessing, is to be able to contact God and taste Him daily through the word of His breath. (Truth Lessons Level One, p. 2)

God's Word is God's breathing out (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible is God's breathing out; that is, it is the breath breathed out by God. The Bible is God's breathing. To God it is a matter of breathing out; to us it is a matter of breathing in. Through God's breathing out and our breathing in, God's word enters into us and becomes our life and life supply. Therefore, when we read the Bible, we must understand that the Bible is not merely black words on white paper, but it is the breathing out of God. It is full of spiritual breath. Therefore, we must not only understand the Bible with our mind, but we also must contact the word of the Bible with our spirit. Whenever we read the Bible we come to contact God. (The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, p. 16)

The Bible as the Lord's Word being Our Bread of Life

Concerning the Bible, we need a change in our concept. We must see that the Bible is the food which God gives to us. The reason we read the Bible is that we may eat God, drink God, absorb God, and breathe God through the Bible. We know that the Bible is the Word of God. John 1 tells us that the

Word of God is God Himself. The Word of God is God's coming out. God expresses Himself before us as the Word, the Bible.... God is food to man; hence, God expressed Himself as the Word and presents Himself before man for the purpose of becoming man's food. (How to Enjoy God and How to Practice the Enjoyment of God, Ch. 13)

Our prayer is to breathe the Spirit of the Lord, and our reading of the Bible is to receive the Lord as the Word. The Lord as the Word is our food. Man shall not live on bread alone because man does not merely have a body but a spirit within. Our human body without needs the outward food, but our spirit within needs another kind of food. Man cannot live merely on the outward food; hence, the Lord said, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God." The word that proceeds out through the mouth of God is man's spiritual food. Thus, the prophet Jeremiah said, "Your words were found and I ate them." (Ch. 13)

The Bible is the Lord's Word is Life, is Spirit

In John 6:63 the Lord Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit." The words of the Bible are not only letters but spirit. We also should recall the Lord's word in John 4:24: "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit." Here the Lord points out a fundamental principle: God is Spirit, and man can only touch Him with his spirit. God is Spirit, and we can only worship Him with our spirit; we cannot worship Him with anything other with our mind, emotion, or will. Colossians 2:23 speaks of "self-imposed worship." This means worshipping with the will. This is wrong because God is Spirit, and because God is Spirit, those who worship Him must worship in spirit. John 6 says that the Lord's words are spirit. The basic principle is the same: Since the Lord's words are spirit, we have to read them in spirit. In other words, we can only touch spiritual things with the spirit. (How to Study the Bible, p.9)

PRAY-READING THE LORD'S WORD

Contacting God Himself
Through Pray-reading the Lord's Word

Every time when we come to contact the Lord's word, we have to know that we are coming to contact God Himself. When we open and read the Bible, our first concept or our first step should be that we are here to contact a living God. This living God has breathed all that He is and all of His riches in the Word. From the beginning to the end, the Bible is the breath of God. I come not to study philosophy or literature, but I come to contact and receive what God has breathed out.

Whenever you open and read the Bible, the first concept you need to have, and the first step you need to do is to prepare yourself to contact God. What you are about to read is what God has breathed out. You are reading something on which God has breathed. You are not studying any teaching or literature, but you are contacting the God who is expressed and explained. (How to Enjoy God and How to Practice the Enjoyment of God, Ch. 6)

In Ephesians 6:17 and 18 Paul definitely charges us to receive the Word of God by means of prayer. Some who oppose the practice of pray-reading insist that these verses cannot be applied this way. However, according to the Greek text, we must say that we should receive the Word of God either by means of prayer or through prayer. Here Paul tells us to receive the Word of God and also gives us the way to receive it-by means of prayer. Therefore, we cannot deny that in the Bible there is such a thing as pray-reading the Word.

We need to read the Word and receive it by prayer. Throughout the centuries many saints have practiced this in principle. Some have said that we need to pray when we read the Bible. Others have pointed out that we should read the Bible prayerfully. To read the Bible prayerfully is to pray-reading without knowing this term. Spontaneously in coming to the Word they have prayed with the Word and over the Word. (Life-Study of Philippians, p.310)

Enjoying God as Food
Through Pray-reading the Lord's Word

Brothers and sisters, He is everything. He is your food, and He wants to be your life in the form of food. He puts Himself in the Spirit and the Word. One is intangible, and one is tangible; one is in you, and one is outside of you. The two cooperate together so that your inner man along with your outer man

may learn to contact God. Sometimes you should pray, and sometimes you should read. Sometimes you read briefly, and sometimes you pray briefly. You pray and you read, you read and you pray, until a certain time, you are not clear whether you are praying or reading, reading or praying. Actually, you are praying, and you are reading; you touch the Word, and you touch the Spirit. It is the outward Word entered within, and it is the inward Word expressed without. (How to Enjoy God and How to Practice the Enjoyment of God, Ch. 14)

In the Bible, there are at least three instances which reveal that man eats the word of God. The first one is Jeremiah. He said, "Your words were found and I ate them" (15:16). Eating is not only for receiving but also for absorption. To absorb something is to receive it into you and digest it that it may become part of you. The second instance is found in Ezekiel which tells us that the prophet Ezekiel ate the word of God (3:1-3). The last instance is in Revelation 10 where the apostle John also ate the word of God.

From the above verses we may understand that the word of God is not merely for our learning but also for our tasting, eating, enjoyment, and digestion. The Lord Jesus even likened the word of God to spiritual food, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4). Every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God is spiritual food which nourishes us. This is the food on which we live. (How to Enjoy the Spiritual Food, p 8 in Chinese)

How to Pray-read the Word of God

Now we have to see what is the proper way to receive God's word. We must read Ephesians 6:17-18a, "And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God." According to these verses, what is the way for us to receive God's word? It is by means of all prayer and petition. This is what we mean by pray-reading. We must receive God's word by means of all prayer. (p. 9)

Another simple, spiritual, and most beneficial way to read the Bible is pray-reading. We take the Bible text as prayer and pray-read with it. Not only do we read and pray simultaneously, or pray and read, read and pray; but also

we directly turn the text we are reading into the very words of prayer to pray with. At times we may apply the text to ourselves through prayer. The more we repeat this kind of pray-reading, the more uplifted and released our spirit becomes and the greater, deeper, and richer the benefit is which we receive. (Life Lessons, pp. 41-42)

Pray-reading with Spirit

To comprehend the Word literally we first need to read the black and white letters with our eyes as well as with our mind. Second, we need to pray-read, converting all that we see and all that we comprehend into prayer. When we pray, we use our spirit. At first, we may use our mind to pray, but after three to five sentences our spirit will rise up. This is a definite fact. Therefore, never forget that the essence of the Word of God is God's breathing out. When you read it, you should breathe it in. On God's side, it is a matter of His breathing out; on our side, it is a matter of our breathing in. The spiritual breath comes out of Him and enters into us. That which comes out of Him and enters into us is the spiritual breath. The Word of God is spirit and life. Our mind cannot touch the Spirit; only our spirit can touch the Spirit. If we do not touch the Spirit, we do not have life. Only by touching the Spirit can we have life. Ultimately, this life is Christ, and it is also God Himself. (The Full Knowledge of the Word of God, p.23)

Pray-Reading with the Saints

In order to have more enjoyment and nourishing from God's word and have an adequate amount of pray-reading, we need the Body, the church. We may enjoy pray-reading by ourselves, but if we try to pray-read with a group of Christians, we will be in the third heaven. This is because the food is for the whole Body and not merely for an individual member. Hence, the best way to pray-read the Word is to be with other members in the Body. You can also be benefited by your personal pray-reading, but once you pray-read with other brothers and sister, you will see the difference.

The Four Keys to Pray-Reading

When we pray-read with other brothers and sisters, we have to remember four words: fast, short, genuine, and new. First, our prayer has to be fast, not hesitating. Once we pray fast, we will not have the time to consider with our mind. Second, our prayer has to be short because long prayers require composing. We have to forget about organizing a long prayer, but we need to say only a short sentence or a phrase. Third, we also need to be genuine without pretense. Say it in a genuine way. Lastly, our prayer has to be fresh and not old. For us to have fresh prayers, the best way is not to use our own words, instead, pray with the words of the Bible. Every part, every line of the entire Bible can be used in our prayers; this is the freshest prayer!

Over tens of thousands of people have proved that this is the best way to read the Bible. This method has caused them to have a revolutionary change in their life. As long as you are willing to practice with a sincere heart, you will touch the living Spirit! If you try pray-reading both personally and corporately, you will be able to testify that the riches of Christ has dispensed into you through pray-reading the word of God. You will receive the blessing and growth in your spiritual life, and you will experience a great change. Through pray-reading the word of God, you enjoy Christ and receive His nourishing, and you will grow unto maturity, fill with life, and be saturated with the eternal one. (Pray-Reading the Word)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, explain why the Bible as the word of life is the definition, explanation, and expression of God.

2. According to the Bible, explain why we need to receive ad enjoy the word of life through pray-reading.

3. How do we build up a life of pray-reading?

LESSON NINE

THE BASIC KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF THE NEW BELIEVERS (3)— GOD'S ECONOMY AND CONSECRATION TO THE LORD

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.

Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom. 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

Matt. 22:37 And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

Matt. 22:38 This is the great and first commandment.

Hymn: 472

OUTLINE

I. A Christian who loves the Lord must see God's economy:

A. God's economy is His good pleasure, His will—Eph. 1:9-11.

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph. 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph. 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

B. The center of God's work throughout the ages is the accomplishment of His eternal economy—Eph. 3:9, 11.

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery

is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.

Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

C. The content of God's economy—Eph. 1:9-11; 3:9-11.

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph. 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph. 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

Eph. 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church,

Eph. 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

D. God accomplishes His eternal economy through His dispensing—1 John 3:2.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is.

E. "God Becoming Man and Man Becoming God" that is the Essence of the entire Bible

II. A Christian who loves the Lord must cooperate with God's economy:

A. We need to cooperate with God's economy by consecrating ourselves to love the Lord—Rom. 12:1.

Rom. 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

B. We should love the Lord fervently and give our entire being to Him—Mark 14:9.

Mark 14:9 And truly I say to you, Wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of

her.

C. You should love the Lord you God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind—Matt. 22:37-38.

Matt. 22:37 And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

Matt. 22:38 This is the great and first commandment.

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The Central Line of the Divine Revelation, Ch. 3; Messages Given During the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, Vol. 1, Ch. 20; The Central View of the Divine Dispensation, Ch. 1; The conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 1, Ch. 2; The Economy and Dispensing of God, Ch. 2; A General Outline of God's Economy and the Proper Living of a God-man, Ch.1; The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ, Ch. 1; The Divine Dispensing of the Divine Trinity, Ch. 1; Life-Study of Galatians, Ch. 10; Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 1 Vol. 18, Ch. 12—Loving God; Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 1 Vol. 19, Ch. 12—A Noble Deed.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

A CHRISTIAN WHO LOVES THE LORD MUST SEE GOD'S ECONOMY

God's Economy is His Good Pleasure, His Will

In eternity God planned a will. This will was hidden in Him; hence, it was a mystery. God's will as a mystery hidden in God issues in God's economy, dispensation (3:9). From God's will issues God's economy through His purpose, good pleasure, and counsel.

After God's will, purpose, good pleasure, and counsel, there is God's economy. God's economy is God's household administration, God's plan and arrangement. With an administration, there is the need of a plan, and with a plan, there is the need of an arrangement. Based Upon God's will, He made a purpose. In His will and purpose, there is His good pleasure. Then the Divine

Trinity had a council to make a decision, which is the divine counsel. Based upon that counsel, God made a plan with an arrangement, and this plan with this arrangement is His household administration, His economy. (The Central Line of the Divine Revelation, p. 33)

The word economy is a translation of the Greek word oikonomia. This word basically means a kind of management, the sequence of management, and derivatively, a plan, an arrangement or administration. God has a divine management for His administration.

We have seen in 1 Timothy 1:4, the household economy of God is to dispense Himself into His children that He may have a house—the church, to express Himself. From these three portions of God's Word, we have a general idea of the definition of the economy of God. The Greek word oikonomia is composed of two words: oiko means household, and nomos means law. Hence, this word refers to a household management, arrangement, or administration. It refers to the management and distribution of wealth in a rich family. (The Central View of the Divine Dispensation, Ch. 1)

The Center of God's Work throughout the Ages is the Accomplishment of His Eternal Economy

Throughout the ages, God has only one work, and that is to work Himself into man. I hope that everyone sitting here can listen carefully to this. Why did God create the universe? Why did He create man? Why did He create you? What is God trying to accomplish? This is an important question. If God wants to do something, and you do not know about it, your Christian life is meaningless. You may think that God's intention is for you to have joy and peace. It is true that God wants you to have joy and peace, but these things are not God's center. God is not merely giving you peace, blessings, forgiveness, eternal life, and so forth; His central thought is to work Himself into man. What is the ultimate goal of God in the old creation as well as in the new? It is to work Himself into man. This is God's goal. God's redemption is for this goal. He created the universe in order to put man in it, and the purpose for Him to have man is to work Himself into him. I cannot tell you why God wants to do this. But I do know that this is His desire; He wants to work

Himself into man. (Messages Given During the Resumption Watchman Nee's Ministry, p.107)

The Content of God's Economy

God's New Testament economy is His plan to dispense Himself into His chosen people in His trinity. In what way does God dispense Himself into His people in His trinity? This dispensing has three steps. First, it is of God the Father. The Father is he source, the origin. Second, this dispensing is through God the Son, who is the course. Third, God's dispensing is in God the Spirit, who is the instrument and sphere. Through these steps of God the Father, through God the Son, and in God the Spirit God dispenses Himself into His chosen people.

God's New Testament economy to dispense Himself into His chosen people is for the producing of the church(Eph. 3:10).This dispensing brings forth the church for the manifestation of the multifarious wisdom of God according to His eternal purpose made in Christ(Eph.3:9-11). This means that through the dispensing of God in His trinity the church is produced to exhibit God's manifold wisdom.

The church today is the kingdom of God. Therefore, the dispensing of God into us produces the church as the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 4:17 and 20 show that the kingdom is the church life today. In verse 17 Paul refers to his ways "which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church." Then in verse 20 he says, "The kingdom of God is not in speech, but in power." These verses show that the kingdom of God is the church everywhere, and the church everywhere is the kingdom. The kingdom is here because the church is here.

The church as the kingdom of God will have a consummation, and this consummation will be the New Jerusalem for the eternal expression of the Triune God. Revelation 21:2 says, "I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The New Jerusalem is a living composition of all the saints redeemed by God throughout all generations. It is the bride of Christ as His counterpart (John

3:29) and the holy city of God as His habitation (Rev. 21:3). (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 17-18)

God Accomplishes His Eternal Economy through His Dispensing

In order to dispense Himself to man, the first step God took was to become flesh and be a man (John 1:14). When He was in the flesh, on the one hand, He was the Lamb of God who took away man's sin(John1:29).On the other hand, He was the brass serpent, which shows that He became flesh, that is. He was sent in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom.8:3). As the brass serpent, He had only the form of a serpent; He did not have a serpent's poison. While the Lord was in the flesh, He was lifted up on the cross and destroyed Satan, the old serpent (John 3:I4; 12:31).Furthermore, He was also a grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died. Through His death He released God's life (John12:24).

The second step God took in order to dispense Himself to man was to become the life-giving Spirit (I Cor. 15:45b). These two steps contain two "becomes." The Lord first became flesh, and then He became the life-giving Spirit. His becoming flesh was for the accomplishing of redemption and the releasing of God's life. His becoming the life-giving Spirit was for the dispensing of Himself as the Spirit into man to be man's life.

As the life-giving Spirit, Christ first regenerated our spirit (John 3:5-6) so that, in addition to our natural life, we might receive the eternal life of God as the new source and the new element of the new man. After this, Christ as the life-giving Spirit spreads out from our spirit to transform our soul. If we set our mind, the main part of our soul, on the spirit and cooperate with the operation and work of the Lord Spirit within us, our mind will be renewed (Rom. 12:2). When our mind is renewed, our will and our emotion as the other parts of our soul will spontaneously be renewed also. In this way God's life and nature will be added into us, and we will be metabolically transformed into His image to express Him (2 Cor. 3:17-18).

Finally, He will transfigure our bodies so that our bodies may be redeemed to enter into His glory, and our entire being may be like Him in every way

(Rom. 8:17, 23; Phil. 3:21; I John 3:2). This is the ultimate consummation of God's salvation. In His salvation, God first regenerated our spirit. Now He is transforming our soul. In the end, He will transfigure our bodies, so that our three parts will be saturated with the Spirit and will be like Christ in every way. All these steps are part of the divine dispensing in us. (The Economy and Dispensing of God; Ch. 2)

"God Became Man That Man May Become God" Is the Essence of the Entire Bible

The Bible is a mysterious book to us. Tens of thousands of people read the Bible, yet each one has his own opinion. In my studying of the Word, I went through several stages of progression. Eventually, according to my study, I saw that the entire Bible is a book that deals exclusively with the economy of God, and that in particular the New Testament is focused on the consummation of the economy of God. Hence, the New Testament is especially thorough in dealing with the economy of God. Paul wrote to Timothy, asking him to charge and exhort certain dissenting ones not to teach different things any longer. What are the "different things"? They are things that have nothing to do with the economy of God (I Tim.1:3-4). With this as the guideline of observation, today, needless to say in the past generations, very few things taught by Bible teachers can be linked to the economy of God. (A General Outline of God's Economy and the Proper Living of a God-man, pp. 7-8)

"God becoming man and man becoming God" are the essence of the entire Bible. The entire Bible is an explanation of the eternal economy of God....God is God, and He Himself has begotten us as His children. Whatever anything is born of, that is what it is. We cannot say that when sheep beget sheep, the old sheep are sheep but the little sheep are not sheep. Since God has begotten us, we are the children of God. Furthermore, 1 John 3 says that God will work on us to such an extent that we will be like Him completely (v. 2)....Adam was created with God's image and likeness. Then God set man before the tree of life, meaning that He wanted man, who had God's image, to receive God as his life. As a result, if a man who has received God as his life is not God, then what is he? But the Lord also shows us clearly that we are God in life and

nature. A father begets a son, and this son surely is the same as the Father in life and nature. Suppose the father is an emperor. We cannot say that all his children are emperors. The children have only their father's life and nature but not his status; this is clear. God did this that He might produce a Body for Christ, that is, that He might produce an organism for the Triune God, the ultimate manifestation of which is the New Jerusalem. (The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ, pp. 19-20; pp. 15-16)

A CHRISTIAN WHO LOVES THE LORD MUST COOPERATE WITH GOD'S ECONOMY

We Need to Cooperate with God's Economy by Consecrating ourselves to Love the Lord

God's goal is to work Himself into His redeemed people. God wants to work Himself into His chosen people that He may have a full expression in eternity. This is the goal of God's full salvation. God's dispensation is toward this goal. We must see, not only God's dispensation, but also the goal of God's dispensation, that is, God is working Himself into His chosen people. (The Divine Dispensing of the Divine Trinity, p. 8)

I can testify that because I have seen this heavenly vision, nothing can move me. I am willing to give my whole life for such a vision of God's economy. The old person has been crucified with Christ, and Christ now lives in me, the new person. The life I now live, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God and in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Here we have the mingling of the Triune God with the tripartite man. How wonderful! (Life-Study of Galatians, p. 94)

We Should Love the Lord Fervently and Give Our Entire Being to Him

Since we are all believers, we ought to love God. No other religion speaks of loving God like ours. Loving God is unique to Christianity.

The Bible says that he who believes in the Son has life. Believing is adequate because it does not say to believe with all your heart. He that believes will

have eternal life. We are never told to believe with all our heart. However, loving God requires all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind. This is the first commandment. No matter where it is placed, this commandment is always the first. This is also the greatest commandment. Wherever it may be, it is the greatest. Today we must praise God for commanding us to love Him... God not only wants us to believe in Him, but also to love Him. (Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 1 Vol. 18, Ch. 12—loving God, pp. 355-356)

(In the Bible there is Mary who loved the Lord as an example) "A woman came [Mary-John 12:3], having an alabaster flask of ointment, of very costly pure nard." Pure nard is precious enough, whereas a very costly, pure nard is unmatched in excellence. This very costly, pure nard was inside an alabaster flask. The alabaster flask was also very precious. Not only was Mary offering to the Lord a costly ointment, but the flask that contained the ointment was also very precious. We can offer to the Lord only what is most precious. (She) "And poured it over His head." When she did this, the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment (John 12:3). Not only was the house filled with the fragrance then; even now as we read this passage, we can sense the fragrance! Even the house we are meeting in right now seems to be filled with fragrance! This love to the Lord and this consecration to Him indeed is a fragrance that has lasted until now and will last until eternity. (Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 1 Vol. 19, Ch. 12—A Noble Deed, pp. 601-602)

(Lord Jesus said) "She has done a noble deed on Me." (v.6). The Lord was opposed to the disciples' concept, who thought that such an anointing and consecration to Him was a waste. The Lord said that it was noble deed and not a waste. It is a noble deed to love Him too much, to obey him too much, and to be spent on Him too much; it is not a waste. It is a noble deed to love Him to the extent that we forget about criticism of those who older in the Lord. It is a noble deed to love Him to the extent that we forget about the need of the poor outside. It is not a waste. It is a noble deed to over Him to the extent that we waste everything on Him. This is not a waste. (p. 605)

You Shall Love the Lord Your God with All Your Heart and with All Your Soul and with All Your Mind

Several months ago, a certain Western missionary passed away in Fukien province. I once remarked that among the people I have known, she was a very deed person in the Lord. Since I am more knowledgeable about her affairs, I have considered writing a biography for her and have been collecting her lectures, articles, and essays for editing purposes. A package of her belongings arrived several days ago including a piece of paper with the following words written on it: " O God, I thank you, because You have a commandment saying you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind!" Oh! How profound this is! I do not know how many Christians would say, "God, I thank you because You have a commandment which says you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Indeed, since we are all believers, we ought to love God.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God." Many know this verse well. Only one kind of people enjoy the good: those who love God. If you do not love God, perhaps not even one thing is working for you. God does not alter things; He changes your heart. If you love God, then all things, though unaltered, will work for your good. Sometimes you complain about everything that comes your way. You complain concerning this and concerning that. Yet if love is there, all these will mean nothing to you. Loving God will make an unsatisfactory environment a profitable one. (Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 1 Vol. 18, Ch. 12—loving God, pp. 359-360)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, describe briefly what is the economy of God?

2. According to the Bible, describe briefly why does a Christian who loves the Lord need to cooperate with the God's economy through consecration?

3. How can we give ourselves for God's economy in a practical way?

LESSON TEN

THE BASIC KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF THE NEW BELIEVERS (4)— THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE MEETING LIFE

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Heb. 10:24-25 And let us consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works, Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.

1 Cor. 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

Hymn: 855

OUTLINE

I. A pursuing Christian must know the Body of Christ:

A. The church is the Body of Christ, which composed of many members—Rom. 12:5.

Rom. 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

B. The Body of Christ is expressed as many local churches in practicality—Eph. 1:23.

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

C. We must live in the Body of Christ in order to receive the supply from the Body—1 Cor. 12:20.

1 Cor. 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.

II. The principles of meetings and the meeting life:

A. Meeting is God's ordination for the believers—Heb. 10:24-25.

Heb. 10:24 And let us consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works,

Heb. 10:25 Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.

B. Set apart the Lord's Day—Acts 20:7.

Acts 20:7 And on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread, Paul conversed with them since he was to go forth on the next day; and he extended his message until midnight.

C. The different kinds of meetings in the church life.

1. Bread breaking meeting—Acts 2:46-47.

Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart,

Acts 2:47 Praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.

2. Prophesying meeting—1 Cor. 14:26.

1 Cor. 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

3. Prayer meeting—Acts 12:5.

Acts 12:5 So then Peter was kept in the prison; but prayer was being made fervently by the church to God concerning him.

4. Small group meeting—Acts 5:42.

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ.

REFERENCE

A Thorough View of the Body of Christ, Ch. 1; (RcV) Rom. 12:5 note 2; The Mystery of Christ, Chs. 4, 10; Knowing the Church, Ch. 2; Life Lessons, Vol. 2, Lsns. 14-17; Basic Lessons on Service, Lsn. 2; Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 5, Ch. 50; Vol. 3, Ch. 30; The Practice of prophesying, Ch. 1; The Practice of the Group Meeting, Ch. 6.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

A PURSUING CHRISTIAN MUST KNOW THE BODY OF CHRIST

The purpose of God's salvation is to have Christ reproduced in millions of saints that they may become the members of His Body, not separate and complete individual units but parts of a living, functioning, and coordinated, corporate whole. Although these parts have different functions, they are not detached from one another. Rather, they are "individually members one of another." Each member is organically joined to all the others, and each needs the function of all the others. All the members must be coordinated together to practice the Body life that is revealed in Romans 12. (Rom. 12:52)

The Church is the Body of Christ, which Composed of All the Members

We became the members of the Body of Christ because the Holy Spirit, when we repented and believed in the Lord, entered into us so that we received the life of God and became regenerated. Actually, this Holy Spirit who has entered into us is the life of God becoming life within us. From that day on, there has been something additional within us. Sometimes this something within us rebukes and regulates us. This is not merely the functioning of our conscience. Rather, we have something more within us, the Lord who has become our living person. This is tremendous. My burden is to show you that the source of the Body of Christ is the Father: He is the source of life. Through His Spirit He has sanctified us and regenerated us that we might become the sons of God, the members of Christ. I hope that all of you sitting here will be clear concerning this matter. Today we do not believe into a religion, nor do we join a religion. We believe into a living and true Triune God. As soon as we repented and believed into Him, this enliven us and to make us a part of the organic Body of Christ. (A Thorough View of the Body of Christ, pp. 12-13)

The Body of Christ is Expressed

as Many Local Churches in Practicality

The Body of Christ is not only universal; it is also local. Every local church is the manifestation of the Body of Christ in that locality. All of the riches of Christ are vested in the local church. The authority of the Head is vested in the local expression of the Body. Apostles and elders in the local church are representative members of the Body, but they are not the Body. Apostles and elders in the local church are representative members of the Body, but they are not the Body. The entire company of believers in a locality, not just a section of the believers, constitutes the church in that locality. The church is not one member; it represents the whole Body in a locality. Hence, when we touch the local church, we touch the Body. Participating in the fellowship of the local church is participating in the fellowship of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is not something abstract or unfathomable; the Body of Christ is manifested in the local churches. Anyone who wants to live in the Body in a practical way has to be in the local churches. He should fellowship with the local saints, be edified in the local church, and be built up together in mutuality.

We Must Live in the Body of Christ in order to Receive the Supply from the Body

Every Christian should know that he is only a member. If he does not have the other members, he will not survive. In the Body all the members must be joined together before they can become the Body. All the members in the Body are related to one another, and they cannot be separated from one another. Between the members there must be a mutual supply and a mutual relatedness. Only then can the members survive. If a Christian lives an independent life, sooner or later he will weaken and dry up. If I am an ear, I cannot see and neither should I expect to see by myself. The whole body is dependent upon the eyes for sight, and no amount of prayer will give sight to the other members. If I am an ear, what should I do if I want to see something? I should go to the eyes-a brother or sister who sees-and ask for help. In order to go on with the Lord, we must recognize His supply for us in the Body and

avail ourselves of it. The whole Body is built up through the interdependence among the members. (The Mystery of Christ, pp. 21, 61)

THE PRINCIPLES OF MEETINGS AND THE MEETING LIFE

Meeting is God's Ordination for the Believers

Since the church is the assembly called out by God from the world, it should meet continually. Meetings enable God's called out congregation to be supplied, established, and perfected, that the goal of God's calling this assembly may be accomplished.

Hebrews 10:25 say that the assembling of ourselves together refers to our Christian meetings. God has ordained the way in which every living thing in the universe should exist. God's ordination is the very law by which a particular living thing lives. If the living thing obeys that law, it will survive and be blessed. God is the same toward us who have believed in Christ. God's ordination for us, which becomes our law of existence and blessing, is the meetings. As water is to the fish, and air to the birds, so are the meetings to the Christians. As the fish must live in the water and the birds must exist in the air, so the Christians must maintain their spiritual existence and living by the meetings.

Every kind of life has its own characteristic, and usually, many characteristics. The spiritual life we believers have received, being the life of God in us, also possesses many characteristics. For example, the hatred for sin and the separation from sin are characteristics of this life. The desire to draw near to God and the willingness to serve Him are also its characteristics. One of the many characteristics of our spiritual life is to flock together, to meet together. John 10:3 and 16 show us that since we are saved, we are the Lord's sheep. The characteristic of the sheep's life is to flock together and to dislike isolation from the other sheep. Hence, the Bible says that we are not only the Lord's sheep, but even more, His flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). In order to be a sheep which shares in the blessing of the flock, we must meet together with the flock. The characteristic of the spiritual "sheep life" within us requires this of us. (Life Lessons, Lsn. 14, p.95)

Set Apart the Lord's Day

Acts 2 tells us that the early believers had the Lord's table, the breaking of bread, every day in their homes (vv. 42,46). Later in Acts 20:6b-7a, we can see that the saints had a habit of having the Lord's table on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week. Verse 6b says that the apostle Paul and his co-workers stayed in Troas for seven days. Then the next verse says that on the first day of the week they had the Lord's table. This strongly indicates that by that time the Lord's table was conducted mainly on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, the day of resurrection.

We need to say a little word here about the difference between the Lord's Day and Sunday. Sunday is a heathen, idolatrous term adopted by Catholicism and maintained by our tradition. Actually, it is idolatrous to say a day belongs to the sun. The Bible refers to this day as the first day of the week. Revelation 1:10 calls this day "the Lord's Day." We must respect the first day of the week as a memorial of the Lord's resurrection. We should consider this day as a day of the Lord and for the Lord.

In ancient times, the saints eventually had the Lord's table on the Lord's Day, the first day of every week. This is also proved by 1 Corinthians 16:2. In this verse the apostle Paul told the saints that on the first day of each week, they should offer something of their material possessions to the Lord. This proves that on the first day of each week, the early saints met together. Today the best day for the Christians to meet together is the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. We must make this clear to the saints. (Basic Lesson on Service, pp. 17-18)

"This is the day that Jehovah has made; let us exult and rejoice in it" (Psa. 118:24). The preceding verse says, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner" (v. 22). Peter said in Acts 4:4-11 that this refers to Christ's resurrection. Here "the day that Jehovah has made" is the day of the Lord's resurrection. The day of the Lord's resurrection is not an coincidence but is God's ordination. In the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, God had already spoken of it (Lev. 23:10-11; Hosea 6:2), and the Lord also had mentioned it before His death (John 2:19; Matt. 16:21). This day is God's special ordination with a particular purpose. Here it says that we

have to exult and rejoice because in this day, the Lord resurrected, He began the new creation, and He made us a new creation. Hence, in this day we should exult and rejoice and testify the Lord's resurrection and should not be disheartened and sorrowful, like one who is not of the new creation in resurrection. (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 5, Ch. 50)

The Different Kinds of Meetings in the Church Life

Bread Breaking Meeting

"And on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). This should be the first kind of regular meeting for us who have been redeemed by the Lord's death. To break bread is to eat the Lord's supper, remembering the Lord who died for us. Other meetings emphasize our receiving. Only the table meeting emphasizes the Lord for Him to gain something. (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 3, Ch. 30)

The bread breaking meeting is not for anything other than remembering the Lord with the remembrance of the Lord as its center for the Lord's enjoyment. Everything in this meeting, whether hymn singing, prayer, Bible reading, or words of inspiration, should take the Lord as the center, speaking either concerning His person and work, His love and virtues, His living or suffering on the earth, or His honor or glory in heaven, that others may consider or realize these things in order to remember the Lord Himself. In such a meeting, we should think of the Lord in our hearts and behold the Lord in our spirit that we would be inspired concerning the Lord. Then we will express our inspiration through songs, prayers, reading of the Bible, or words, that the feeling of the entire meeting would be directed to the Lord and that all would remember the Lord. (Life Lessons, Lsn. 16, pp. 107-108)

The meeting for the breaking of bread is a meeting for the believers' worship. According to the procedure in God's salvation, we first receive the Lord and then draw near to the Father. Thus, in this meeting for worship, we should first remember the Lord and then worship the Father. The center of the section of remembering the Lord is the remembrance of the Lord, and the center of the section of worshipping the Father is the worship of the Father,

where all the prayers, hymns, and words should be directed toward the Father. (Life Lessons, Lsn. 17, p.115)

Prophesying Meeting

"Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up" (1 Cor. 14:26). The meeting mentioned here is for the exercise of spiritual gifts and for mutual building up. In this kind of meeting, there should not be a special person doing a specific thing, but everyone should exercise the spiritual gifts: one has a psalm, one has a teaching, one has a revelation, one does this, and another does that. Each one may participate with the goal of building up and edifying others. (Life Lessons, Lsn. 15, p.21)

First Corinthians 14:31 says, "For you can all prophesy one by one." This verse is one of the clearest verses in the entire Bible. It says that all the believers have the capacity to prophesy. Capacity denotes an ability by birth. Dogs do not have the capacity to speak human language; they have the capacity to speak. We, members of the Body of Christ, all gifts, including prophecy, and says that these gifts differ according to the grace given to each member. These verses, however, refer to the exercise of the gifts outside the meetings. In the Body of Christ, we have different gifts and functions outside the meetings. The gifts in Romans 12 are not the gifts exercised in the meetings. In the meetings all the members can prophesy (1 Cor. 14:24,31). (The Practice of Prophesying, pp. 11-12)

Prayer Meeting

The Lord said in Matthew 18:18, Lord says; "Truly I say to you, Whatever you bind o the earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in heaven." Here the Lord is speaking concerning the prayer of a meeting. This kind of prayer is more powerful than the prayer of an individual, being able to bind on earth what has been bound in heaven, and to loose on earth what has been loosed in heaven....In Acts 12:5, we see that on the day when Peter was imprisoned, the church prayed fervently for him.... That prayer caused God to perform a great miracle, delivering Peter out of prison. (Life Lessons, Lsn. 15, pp. 100-101)

Group Meeting

The proper group meetings should consist of two sections. The first section should include fellowship, intercession, mutual care, and shepherding, and the second section should carry out the perfecting of the saints through teaching. In the first section of the group meeting, the attendants should fellowship concerning each person's present spiritual condition and practical environment.

After fellowshipping about each other's situations, the attendants in the meeting will spontaneously be stirred up to intercede, to pray, for one another. This prayer will not be formal or like a theatrical performance, but will be sincere and practical. After the fellowship and prayer, the attendants in the group meeting should extend their loving concern for one another in the exercise of a definite and practical care....The purpose and goal of the group meetings is the perfecting of the saints through teaching in mutuality. The way to have the proper teaching in a group meeting is not by waiting for an assigned teacher to speak. Rather, the best way is to teach by asking questions. There are no assigned teachers in the group meetings; all the attendants are teachers. (The Practice of the Group Meeting, pp. 39-42)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, explain why a pursuing Christian must know the Body of Christ—the church?

2. According to the Bible, explain what are the principles of meetings and the meeting life?

3. What kind of meetings do we have in the church life?

LESSON ELEVEN

THE BASIC KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF THE NEW BELIEVERS (5)— THE MINISTRY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND BEGETTING, NOURISHING, TEACHING AND BUILDING

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

Col. 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ.

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, both to Jew first and to Greek.

Rom. 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

Hymn: Brighten the Corner Where You Are—Service—Doing One's Part

OUTLINE

I. The unique goal of the New Testament ministry is to build up the Body of Christ:

A. The work of the ministry is to build up the Body of Christ—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:12.

Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Eph. 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

B. Christ, the ascended Head, gave the gifted persons to the church, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministry, unto the

building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:11.

Eph.4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers.

C. We need to be perfected to do the work of the ministry—2 Tim. 2:2.

2 Tim. 2:2 And the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also.

II. We need to carry out the work of the ministry through Begetting, Nourishing, Teaching, and Building:

A. All of us need to serve God as priests to practice the four steps of the new way—Rom. 5:16.

Rom. 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

B. We need to be functioning members to go forth and speak to people—Col. 1:28.

Col. 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ.

C. We need to follow the pattern of the Lord Jesus to build up the habit of contacting people—Rom. 1:16.

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, both to Jew first and to Greek.

REFERENCE

The Normal Christian Church Life, Ch. 1; The Life-Study of Ephesians, Msgs. 38, 42-43; God's Economy and the building up of the Body of Christ, Ch. 5; The building up of the Body of Christ, Ch. 2; The New Testament Priests of the Gospel, Chs. 1-2, 5; The up-to-date Presentation of the God-ordained way and the signs concerning the coming of Christ, Ch. 4; The Church Life in the Lord's Recovery Today, Ch. 2; The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, Ch. 9

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE UNIQUE GOAL OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY BEING TO BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST

Now God has His own work. He has to build up the Body of Christ until they all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The building up of the Body of Christ has the most significant position among God's work today. It is the center of God's work today. God pays a special attention to the building up of the Body of Christ. (The Normal Christian Church Life)

The Work of the Ministry Being to Build Up the Body of Christ

For this extremely important work, God particularly chooses a group of people to do this work. This group of workers is responsible for God's work. We do not mean that today God has no other work to do or that He does not have any other workers. We simply say that His main work today is to build up the Body of Christ. God still has many workers today, but the group of workers who builds up the Body of Christ is God's special workers.

God has many works, which are divided into many ministries. The part of work which God particularly assigns to man is a ministry. God assigns this one for this ministry, and God assigns another one for that ministry. There are numerous ministries because God uses man in different aspects. However, the Bible shows us that there is one ministry which is more special than other ministries. The Bible called this ministry "the ministry" which is distinct from other ministries, and God called the work of building up the Body of Christ "the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12) which is distinct from other works. God has many workers, but only one group of people is doing "the work of the ministry". God has assigned many ministries to man, but there is only one group of people who is in "the ministry." (The Normal Christian Church Life)

Christ, the Ascended Head, Gave the Gifted Persons

to the Church, for the Perfecting of the Saints unto the Work of Ministry, Unto the Building up of the Body of Christ

In (Ephesians 4) verse 12 we see the reason for Christ's giving of the gifts: "for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ." The Creek word rendered "for" in this verse is weighty and significant. It indicates that Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers for the purpose of perfecting the saints. The saints are perfected "unto the work of ministry." The Greek word translated "unto" means "resulting in." Therefore, the perfecting of the saints results in the work of ministry. The many gifted persons in verse 11 have only one ministry, that of ministering Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ, the church. This is the unique ministry in the New Testament economy (2Cor.4:1; 1 Tim. 1:12). According to the grammatical construction, "the building up of the Body of Christ" is "the work of ministry." Whatever the gifted persons in verse 11 do as the work of ministry must be for the building up of the Body of Christ. (The Life-Study of Ephesians, pp. 323-324)

The ascended Head gave four kinds of gifts. The first class is the apostles (Eph. 4:11). These apostles receive the revelation of God's New Testament economy concerning Christ and the church. They preach the gospel of Christ to save the sinners chosen and called by God, bringing them to Christ. They are also able to establish local churches, to determine doctrines, to release the truth, to perfect the saints, and to build up the Body of Christ (1 Tim. 2:7; Eph. 4:11-12). (The Economy of God and the Building up of the Body of Christ, p.59)

Ephesians 4:12 says that the gifted persons are "for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ." According to the grammatical construction, the week of the ministry is the building up of the Body of Christ. The perfecting us unto the work of the ministry, which is the building up of the Body of Christ. The word " unto" in Greek in Ephesians 4:12 means in view of, for the purpose of, resulting in, issuing in. The perfecting of the saints is in view of the work of the ministry,

which is the unique ministry in the New Testament. Thousands of believers may be doing a work of a thousand parts, but every part should be for the unique work of the unique ministry to build up the Body of Christ, not to the building up of the church. Paul's stress was not on the building up of the church as a congregation but on the building up of the Body as an organism. The saints are perfected unto the work of the ministry of the building up of the Body of Christ as an organism. (The Building Up of The Body of Christ, pp. 29-30)

All the saints should be building members. Ephesians 4:11 says, "And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers." These gifted ones are not high officials with a special rank. Father, they are given for the perfecting of the saints (v.12). The saints need to be perfected, equipped, furnished, unto the work of ministry. This work of ministry is the building up of the Body of Christ. Because so many saints are not yet do in the work of ministry, they need the gifted ones mentioned in verse11 to perfect them, to equip them, that they may be qualified to carry out the work of ministry for the building up of the Body of Christ. (The Life-Study of Ephesians, p.357)

We Need to be Perfected to do the Word of the Ministry

All the members of the Body of Christ are parts of the one organism. What a privilege, what a mercy, and what an all-sufficient grace that we are now in the one organism, of the Triune God! As living members of this organism, we need the organic perfecting. We need to be perfected to do what the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers do. We have to be perfected so that the entire Body of Christ functions in the same way that the gifted members do. (The Building Up of The Body of Christ, p.25)

As verse 12 (Ephesians 4) indicates, the work of ministry is equal to building up the Body of Christ. Among us there is just one ministry. Although thousands of us may participate in the work of ministry, the ministry itself is unique. This ministry is strictly for the building up of the Body of Christ. No matter who we may be, leaders or followers, we all are working to carry out

the ministry in the New Testament economy to build up the Body of Christ. We are not here to go on alone, but to go on with others, even to bring others on. As we ourselves go on, we need to bring others on. We take others on by speaking for Christ, by teaching, and by shepherding.

WE NEED TO CARRY OUT THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY BY BEGETTING, NOURISHING, TEACHING, AND BUILDING

The building up of the Body of Christ does not depend on a few people. It does not depend on the responsible brothers in a church. Nor does it depend on the co-workers or the full-timers. Rather, every one of the perfected saints should participate in the work of the building up of the Body of Christ. Begetting, nourishing, teaching, and building are the four major steps in the new way. When every one of the saints in the church can beget, nourish, teach, and build, God's eternal purpose is fulfilled. God's eternal purpose is to have the Body of Christ, and the steps to arrive at this purpose are the begetting through the preaching of the gospel, our nourishing through the home meetings, our teaching through the small group meetings, and our building up through the church meetings. (The New Testament Priests of the Gospel, p.25)

All Of Us Need To Serve God As Priests To Practice The Four Steps Of The New Way

The New Testament service ordained by God in the Scriptures indicates that all New Testament believers are priests to serve God (Rev. 1:5-6). The priests are those who serve God. Everyone who serves God, anywhere and at any time, must be a priest whose special profession is to serve full time before God. Although he serves full time, he still labors for his livelihood, working with his own hands to minister to his own needs.

Almost everywhere in the entire New Testament, God speaks concerning how to be priests of the gospel of God, how to serve God. Paul called the New Testament priests the priests of the gospel (Rom. 15:16). They are priests, yet they are gospel preachers, priests who specialize in the gospel. In the Old Testament the priests specialized in taking care of the sacrifices. By this we

can see that the priests of the gospel, mentioned in Romans 15:16, are those who specialize in taking care of the gospel. ... [And] the New Testament priests of the gospel should be laboring priests of the gospel—not striving and laboring. They are priests who diligently labor in the gospel of God. Paul was such a priest of the gospel of God, and we too should be such. (The Up-to-Date Presentation of the God-Ordained Way and the Signs Concerning of Christ, p.35)

Begetting—
Preaching the Gospel and Saving the Sinners

The first matter in the Christian service is the preaching of the gospel. This is like marriage and childbirth. After a young couple become married, the first thing that occurs is childbearing. If a couple has no child, there is a big lack. Praise the Lord that we are all saved today. In other words, we are all married. What ought to follow is childbearing. The spiritual childbearing is the preaching of the gospel. Paul said, "For though you have ten thousand guides in Christ, yet not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). Paul preached the gospel and led many to salvation. These Corinthian believers then became the spiritual children begotten by Paul.

Nourishing—
Feeding the Lord's Sheep

After the fruit-bearing comes the nourishing. Every mother knows that the first thing a newborn child does is drink milk. Hence, the first thing a mother has to learn is how to nurse her child. After a child is born, we do not ask him to come to us to be fed. Rather, we have to go to him and feed him with milk. If we cannot go to the homes of the new ones daily, we should go at least once every three days. The best way is to go every day. When we go to the homes of the new brothers and sisters and feed them with spiritual food, this is what we call the home meetings. (The New Testaments Priests of the Gospel, pp. 13-14)

Teaching—Perfecting the Saints to Build Up the Body of Christ

After a person is nourished for a month, he will be somewhat established. By then he should immediately be brought to the small group meetings to be in touch with other brothers and sisters. This will bring him into a communal life and will usher him into the church life. In the small group meetings, there must not only be the teaching, but there must be the nourishing as well. Moreover, the small groups must organic. Everyone has to teach, and everyone has to learn. In this way, the Body of Christ will be built. In building the small groups, we are warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ. This presenting is the work of the priests.

Building—Speaking for the Lord to Build Up the Church through Prophesying

The work of the New Testament ministry is none other than the building up of the Body of Christ. First Corinthians 14 is a chapter specifically on the building up of the church. How can the church be built up? It is built up by prophesying. Paul said, "For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all be encouraged" (v.31). "Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up" (26). [Therefore, we all should exercise prophesying to build up the Body of Christ.] (The New Testament Priests of the Gospel, pp. 14, 25)

Be a Functioning Member, going forth and speaking to people

What God is after today is not a congregation. What He is after is a Body. A congregation is an organization, but a body is not an organization. Rather, it is an organism. The members in a human body do not come about by organization. Rather, they come about organically. In the same way, the church of God does not come about through organization. Rather, it comes about organically. Today's Christianity emphasizes the congregation. As such it is surely an organization. As long as a learned and eloquent speaker comes and speaks persuasively, the congregation is kept together. Once the able speaker is gone, the congregation cannot remain. This is a congregation, an

organization. What God is after is not a congregation; He is after a Body. Hence, Ephesians 1:20-23 says that Christ resurrected from the dead and transmitted all the riches of ascension to those who believe in Him. Those who believe in Him are the church, the Body of Christ. For this reason, the preaching of the gospel must be done by every member of this Body.

Matthew 28:19 says, "Go [ye] therefore." The "ye" here does not refer only to the little company of disciples. It does not refer only to the hundred and twenty who prayed that day at Pentecost in the upper room. Rather, it refers to all those who believe in the Lord. All believers past and present are included in this "ye." We who are the disciples of the Lord should all go out. Only then will this match the nature of the Body that God desires. What God. is after is not an individual gospel giant but a Body.

Today when we help all the brothers and sisters to be priests, we have to help them all to preach the gospel. Everyone has to go out to save people directly. No one can replace anyone else. This is what is illustrated in John 15. The Lord is the true vine, and we are branches of that vine. Those branches that do not bear fruit are cut off (vv. 1-2). The cutting off here does not refer to eternal perdition. Rather, it refers to the loss of the rich enjoyment in Christ. (pp. 26,66)

Following The Pattern of The Lord Jesus To Build Up The Habit of Contacting People

The New Testament tells us that we all are priests of the gospel and must personally go forth to save sinners. We all need to struggle for this. This God-ordained way for gospel preaching is not for us to invite people to come and listen but for us to go and bring salvation to people. In the Gospels, the Lord Jesus Himself was such a pattern. He desired to preach the gospel to us, the sinners, but instead of sitting in heaven and bidding us to go there, He came down from heaven to us. He came first to seek and then to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). He also sent out twelve disciples to pass through village after village to announce the gospel and heal the sick everywhere (9:1-6). Afterward, He also appointed seventy disciples and sent them two by

two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to come, to find the sons of peace and reap His harvest (Luke 10:1-6).

One day He purposely went to the city of Jericho to seek a God-chosen yet fallen sinner, Zaccheus, and to bring salvation to his whole house (19:1-9). He also went to Samaria and sat by the well of Jacob, waiting for an immoral woman that He might give her the living water to quench the thirst deep within her (John 4:3-14). It was in this way that He went to different places to seek and save sinners. Therefore, after His death and resurrection, He charged His disciples before He ascended to the heavens that they should go and disciple all the nations (Matt.28:19) and that, after they had received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and had been clothed with power from on high, they should go everywhere to be His witnesses, beginning from Jerusalem, then to the surrounding cities in the entire land of Judea, passing through Samaria, and spreading unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). (The Church Life in the Lord's Recovery Today, p.23)

You have to pray and look to the Lord all the time to give you some proper constant contacts....We must learn to go and contact people through prayer, in prayer, and with prayer all the time. We can give them a phone call or send them one of our gospel tracts. We should read these tracts so that we know their contents. Then we can send a certain tract to someone based upon his need....First Corinthians 15:58 says that our labor in Christ will never be in vain. Only the Lord knows what will be the issue of our labor. We need to labor in Him until the day we see Him at His return. We have started, and we still have to grow. We should have the assurance that the Lord has done something with us because we have been pursuing Him and seeking Him. On the one hand, we should not analyze. On the other hand, we should not be satisfied. We must go on to grow, to progress, to mature. Then we need to make a resolution to contact people every day. This is the unique duty, responsibility, and work we have to finish in our Christian life. We must produce some spiritual children...under our care. The only way for us is to contact people, and the only secret of our success is to have constant contacts for our whole life. (The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, pp. 101-102)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, explain what is the work of the ministry.

2. Why is the work of the ministry the unique goal of the New Testament ministry?

3. According to the Bible, please explain the four steps of the practice of the new way.

LESSON TWELVE

HOW TO SERVE WITH THE LITERATURE OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY

Scripture Reading:

Matt. 28:19-20 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

Hymn: 268

OUTLINE

I. The Lord's commission of the divine truths to His recovery:

A. The Lord has opened to us His divine revelation from the making of His eternal economy to the consummation of His eternal goal—the New Jerusalem.

B. The Lord has commissioned us with the ministry of His word.

C. The Lord has provided us with the marvelous environment for the release of His divine revelation.

D. The Lord's charge for us at present is: Go and disciple all the nations to end this age.

II. Those who serve the Lord needing to supply the saints with the Lord's Word.

A. Spending our whole life in these words and being saturated by these words.

B. Promoting the word of the truth among the saints.

C. Encouraging the saints to subscribe for the Direct Mailing Service

(DMS) Account.

III. Learning to nourish people with the Bible and spiritual publications:

A. Using the verses and footnotes in the Recovery Version to nourish people.

B. Using the appropriate spiritual publications to pursue with the new ones.

C. Singing being the best way of nourishing.

D. Doing everything by the spirit and moving by the Lord.

REFERENCE

The World Situation and the Direction of God's Move, Ch. 3; Rising Up to Preach the Gospel, Ch. 6.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE LORD'S GIVING AND COMMISSION OF THE DIVINE TRUTHS TO HIS RECOVERY

The Lord Has Opened to Us His Divine Revelation

The Lord has opened to us His divine revelation from the making of His eternal economy to the consummation of His eternal goal-the New Jerusalem. All the messages we have published unveil the items and details included from God's making of His eternal economy to the New Jerusalem.

The Lord Has Commissioned Us With the Ministry of His Word

The Lord has also commissioned us with the ministry of His word. After I was sent to Taiwan from mainland China, we began to publish a paper entitled The Ministry of the Word. Today our ministry has reached the point of God's New Testament economy and God's dispensing. In 1984 I shared concerning God's New Testament economy in Stuttgart, Germany and a

number of localities in the United States. These are included in a book we have published entitled God's New Testament Economy. I still have more to speak concerning God's economy and God's dispensing.

The Lord Having Provided Us with the Marvelous Environment for the Release of His Divine Revelation

The Lord has provided us with the marvelous environment for the release of the divine revelation. When I began to minister the word in Los Angeles in 1962, we had only conferences and informal trainings. When we moved to Anaheim in 1974, I made the decision to have two ten-day trainings every year. Because these trainings are in the principle of a school, those who come need to be properly enrolled. This helped not only in training the saints but also in having a proper, clear, uplifted atmosphere for the release of the divine truths. (The World situation and the Direction of God's Move, p.38)

The Lord's Present Charge to Us

The Lord's present charge to us should be: go and teach the nations (cf. Matt. 28:19) that the present age may be consummated (24:14). In order to take the Lord's charge, we must keep the oneness. We must have the one accord. If we lose the oneness and the one accord, we are finished as far as the Lord's move is concerned.

The saints...they should not touch any negative things. We should only go to teach the divine truths. We should teach people about God. We should tell them how the eternal God is triune and how He is perfect and complete.... Then we can go on to teach them God's economy. In God's economy, He desires to have man as His expression. We should also teach people about the wonderful process through which the Triune God has passed in order to dispense Himself into us. ...The people also need to see all the aspects of the church. They need to eventually see how the one universal church, as the Body of Christ, should be expressed as the local churches in many localities. We need to teach with much stress the truths concerning the all-inclusive Christ and the church as the organic Body of Christ. Eventually, the church

will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the ultimate manifestation of the processed Triune God mingled with the transformed tripartite man to express the Triune God to the fullest in eternity. Our teaching of the divine truths should include the New Jerusalem as the ultimate consummation of God's dispensing. (p. 40)

THOSE WHO SERVE THE LORD NEEDING TO SUPPLY THE SAINTS WITH THE LORD'S WORD

If we have a clear view, know the Bible, know the situation of Christianity today, and know the mercy which God has given us, we will spend our whole life to bury ourselves in the word and allow the word to saturate us. Then we will have the burden to promote the word of the truth among the brothers and sisters and the churches. We will try our best to create an atmosphere of desiring for the truth and the Life-study among them. I hope that every one of you will learn to appreciate the Life-study, dive yourself into it, and bath in it until the light of the truth saturates you thoroughly. Then you will spread the blessing and benefit which you have received and thus, create an atmosphere for the saints to desire for the truth and the Life-study.

If we are thoroughly saturated in the light of the truth, when we go to the saints, speak to them, and have some fellowship with them, we will be able to point out their need at a critical point, this will create in them a craving, a thirst and hunger, and an atmosphere of longing to read the Life-study. (Abstracts of Messages concerning Different Categories of Service, pp. 67, 69-71 in Chinese)

Regarding the matter of the DMS (Direct Mailing Service) account, since all the churches are receiving the supply from the ministry of the word, you all should help with its distribution. How many copies should we print when we put out a new book? This has been our heavy burden for several decades. If we print too few copies, there may be shortage; but if we print too many copies, we will have to find room for storage, and this increases our stock. It is a waste if the books which we store in the warehouse turn yellow or consume by moth. After the brothers and sisters buy the books, they may not have to read them right away. Just like when we go to a grocery store to buy two pecks

of rice, we will not eat it at one time, but we may eat it in two months. We have to encourage the brothers and sisters to be DMS subscribers. On the one hand, our cost will be lowered as we increase the quantity in printing, and both sides will be benefited; on the other hand, we have to encourage the brothers and sisters to build up the habit of reading after breakfast, after lunch, and after dinner and before going to bed. Reading is always profitable. (p. 85 in Chinese)

LEARNING TO NOURISH PEOPLE WITH THE BIBLE AND SPIRITUAL PUBLICATIONS

Using the Verses and the Footnotes in the Recovery Version to Nourish People

From the beginning we contact people, we have to learn not to speak idle words, common words, or our own words. The best way is to read a good book, especially the Bible. The Bible is a world-renowned classic of classics and is the highest book among the human race. Although people may not believe or may oppose it, they still have to confess that the teaching of the Bible is the highest. When you go out to contact people, you should read several verses of the Scriptures to them. It is especially good to read with our Recovery Version because there are footnotes for all the crucial verses in the Recovery Version. When you read the important verses to them and read the footnotes with them, they will definitely be touched. Once they are stirred up inwardly, you explain to them with the footnotes, and they will surely receive what you said.

Using the Appropriate Spiritual Publications to Pursue with the New Ones

Besides the Bible, we still have many spiritual publications.... When you have a home meeting with [your new ones], you have to observe what their need is. Once you sense that they are lacking in a certain aspect, you have to look for some related messages immediately and pursue with them to nourish and perfect them.

There is a large number of spiritual publications among us, close to one thousand kinds, having different kinds of titles, and every message is very attractive. We have to choose some appropriate publications and keep two or three with us. We also have to prepare a few verses. Then when we go to visit them the second time, we will not speak any idle words to him; rather, we will tell him, “This Bible is really good. Please read it.” According to my experience, eight out of ten people, after they have read it, said, “I want to buy this book. I want to have this Bible.” (Rising Up To Preach The Gospel, Ch. 6)

Singing Being The Best Way of Nourishing

Teaching people to sing is the best way to nourish the new ones. I hope that all of us will learn how to sing hymns. After the first time we went to baptize them at their homes, the second time when we go to have a home meeting with them, we may teach them to sing. By singing only four to five times, the hymns will be sung into them and nourish them. They may have children at home, and when you sing, they may not sing. But after you left, they will start singing. The truths in the hymns will gradually enter into them through singing.

Doing Everything By The Spirit And Moving By The Lord

To lead a home meeting, you need to have variations and be flexible. Never be rigid or monotonous. What we fellowship here is just one of the many ways. If you are willing to learn to practice it, the more you do it, the more familiar and flexible you will be. Then you will know how to make changes with flexibility. If we lead the home meetings in such a way, I believe that the whole family of the new one will receive what we said. After we left, they will recall what we said and have further fellowship. Therefore, you should never think that we are playing gimmicks and are wasting our effort. As long as we have the spirit, we will not do it in vain, and people will receive it.

The most important thing is that we should never practice these things in a rigid way. Before we go to a home meeting, we must have much and living fellowship with the Lord and have a thorough confession and prayer, until

you are filled inwardly. If your spirit is filled with the Lord and His word, and you are able to sing and pray, then you are living, and whatever you do will be living. Once we are living, everything we do will also be living, and even a dead store will be living; but if we are dead, even a living store will be dead. This is what we must learn to practice. Hence, I hope that the brothers and sisters will be careful in whatever they do. Never fall into a habit. You have to be living in whatever you read with the exercising of the spirit. Never think that you always read the Bible and the spiritual publications and that you know how to read them. Once you rely on your habit, you spirit will be killed. Only with the exercise and the release of the spirit will we be able to read in a living way. This is the case with meetings, and it is also the same with the leading of the home meetings.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly what are the Lord's giving and commission of the divine truths to His recovery?

2. How can we supply the saints with the Lord's word?

3. How can we shepherd people with the Recovery Version, spiritual publications, and Hymns?

LESSON THIRTEEN

THE VITAL GROUP (1)

Scripture Reading:

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 2:46-47 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart, praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. The vital group cannot be formed by organization.

II. The vital group could come into being only by a saint who is desperate and absolute for the increase of the Lord's recovery.

III. Such a desperate saint would spontaneously contact others by the Lord's leading and gain some companion or companions for him to have a vital group.

IV. They should definitely and absolutely fulfill the first four basic requirements:

A. Intimately and thoroughly fellowship that they may be blended together.

B. Thorough confession of sins, transgressions, defects, wrongdoings, etc.

C. Thorough consecration of themselves and of all that they have and do to the Lord.

D. Praying unceasingly that they may be brought into the infilling and the outpouring of the essential and economical Spirit.

V. They should pick up the burden and take the action to contact

others, either sinners or Christians:

A. Always taking care of two or three persons.

B. Not expecting to have a quick results, but setting a definite goal with a strong determination to gain at least one remaining fruit yearly.

C. With inexhaustible patience and unceasing intercession.

VI. Build up a habit to contact people:

A. Contacting people by telephone.

B. Contacting people before and after the meetings.

C. Inviting people home for the love feast.

D. Going out to visit people weekly.

REFERENCE

Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, Ch. 10; 1993 Concerning the Lord's Recovery and Our Present Need, Ch. 7; The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, Chs. 6-7.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

A WORD OF BURDEN

To have the vital groups should not be taken as a kind of movement. To be vital, to be vitalized, is an extremely personal matter. It is only possible to be vitalized if you yourself are pressed by the Lord to pursue Him desperately and absolutely in this matter. After being vitalized, you should not have a gathering of many saints to promote or to push this matter as a movement. After being vitalized, the only thing you should do is to seek the Lord's leading concerning whom you should contact among so many saints. You should absolutely follow the Lord's leading, and even His guidance, to contact others and fellowship with them, not more than two or three at a time. You have to give your testimony of how you have been pressed by the Lord to seek Him in the matter of vitalization. You have to initiate a thorough and intimate

fellowship with your contact, which will usher you and your contact into prayers of desperation, which will be honored by the Lord.

You should also lead your contact to make thorough confessions to the Lord and also help him to pay the price at any cost as you have done. By this way a small group would spontaneously come into existence which will be vital, would spontaneously come into existence which will be vital, living, and active in the Lord's interest. When the number of such a vital group increases to ten or more, you should split it into two groups and charge every member in this kind of group to practice the vitalization along the same track as you have been doing all the time.

Since you have been vitalized and have raised up such vital groups, you should pray for the church and the leading ones. As the Lord leads, you should give testimonies in the church meetings, but not in the way of condemning or of promoting or pushing. Avoid the thought to change the church's way of meeting and service. Do not initiate any movement of changes. Prayer is needed, but any thought for any radical change must be avoided. After you get vitalized, do not despise anyone, especially the leading ones, the elderly ones, and the ones who are used to rendering help to others. Do not look down on the weaker ones, the indifferent ones, and the ones that seem to be without any care for spiritual things. In conclusion, you should not expect to see that the church is altogether uniform and unified according to your view and practice. The church is not artificial by man's doing, but organic in the growth of the divine life with the growth of Christ in the believers.

THE VITAL GROUPS CANNOT BE FORMED BY ORGANIZATION

Today we must admit that the deadness of Sardis and the lukewarmness of Laodicea have come into the Lord's recovery. We need to condemn the condition of Sardis among us and also abhor the situation of Laodicea. We need to hate these things, and we also need to get out of these things. This is not a common thing but a matter of life and death facing the whole recovery. It is a life and death matter that we all must be vitalized. (1993 Blending

Conference Messages concerning the Lord's Recovery and Our Present Need, pp. 142-143)

The vital groups cannot be formed by organization. We can testify from our experience that the way of forming vital groups by organization does not work well. Anything that is organic cannot be formed by organizing. Something that is organic can come into being only in a spontaneous and organic way. We need a drastic change in our concept. We should not attempt to organize vital groups by neighborhood, geography, language, or some other factor. This is not the way to be vital. In forming the vital groups, the first thing that we need is to be vital.

A VITAL GROUP CAN COME INTO BEING ONLY BY A SAINT WHO IS DESPERATE AND ABSOLUTE FOR THE INCREASE OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY

A vital group can come into being only by a saint who is desperate and absolute for the increase of the Lord's recovery. A vital group begins with one person. It does not begin with nine or ten persons; it begins with one vital saint. We all need to tell the Lord, "Lord, I want to be that saint, a saint who is desperate and absolute for the increase of the Lord's recovery."

Such a saint must be desperate and absolute not merely to be vital; he must be desperate and absolute for the increase of the Lord's recovery. According to our experience, when we are desperate and absolute for the increase of the church, we have a burden to be vital. If we do not care for the increase but rather are content to see the number in the church remain the same year after year, there is no reason to be vital. We desire to be vital for a purpose, for a goal, and that is for the increase of the Lord's recovery. For this we need to be desperate and we need to be absolute. To be vital we need to begin by taking this matter as life or death. If we take anything as life or death, we are vital in that thing. We need to be desperate and absolute for the increase of the Lord's recovery; then we will be vital.

SUCH A DESPERATE SAINT WOULD SPONTANEOUSLY CONTACT OTHERS BY THE LORD'S LEADING

Such a desperate saint would spontaneously contact others by the Lord's leading and gain some companion or companions for him to have a vital group. A vital group cannot be formed by promoting or by gibing a message or by exhorting the saints to form vital groups. A vital group can be formed only by a saint who is vital. By the Lord's leading such a vital saint will find some others to be his companions. These will then come together to have intimate and thorough fellowship and begin to vitalize one another. In this way the genuine vital groups will be formed and produced in the church life from within. May the Lord give us this kind of desperation and this kind of absoluteness.

THOSE IN THE VITAL GROUPS DEFINITELY AND ABSOLUTELY FULFILLING THE FIRST FOUR BASIC REQUIREMENTS

There are four basic requirements that we must take care of in order to become vital and to be sustained in our vitality. We must be definite and absolute to fulfill these requirements.

Intimate and Thorough Fellowship That We May Be Blended Together

The first requirement is for the intimate and thorough fellowship that we may be blended together. The basis of our blending, the foundation of our blending, is our fellowship, and our fellowship must be intimate and thorough. We need to have an intimate and thorough fellowship in Christ as the element and sphere by exercising our spirit with much and thorough prayer, concerning our status, spiritual condition, and present situation in and with the Lord. Such fellowship is the flowing, the current, of the oneness. We need to have this kind of fellowship for the sake of being blended together into one accord. The way to be blended is by much and thorough prayer, as fine flour of the wheat, with all the members of our group, with the Spirit as the oil, through the death of Christ as the salt, and in the resurrection of Christ as the frankincense, into a dough for the Lord (I Cor. 5:6 7a; Lev. 2:1-13). If by the

Lord's mercy we are able to experience such a blending, we will be absolutely different from what we are today.

The New Testament tells us that we, as the many grains of wheat (John 12:24) become one lump (I Cor. 5:6-7a) and eventually we become a loaf (I Cor. 10:17). After we become a loaf, we mean something and we are something in the hand of the Lord. The loaf is the group. At the Lord's table, we often praise the Lord for the loaf, the bread, yet in actuality we may not be a loaf. As the grains of wheat, we have not been ground, broken, and blended together. The way to become a loaf is to be blended together in the groups by the intimate and thorough fellowship with much and thorough prayer.

Thorough Confession of Sins, Transgressions, Defects, Wrongdoings, Etc.

...we need to have a thorough confession of our sins, transgressions, defects, wrongdoings, etc. We need to confess the sin of individualism and individuality. We also need to confess our sinful nature, its defilements, its attachment to the contamination of the world, and its oldness, asking for the Lord's cleansing with His precious blood. All of these things concerning our sinful nature related to our fallen human being and our natural man become real hindrances to the blending, so our confession is a real need for the vital groups. We need to have the thorough fellowship, and we also need to confess all of the hindrances that we may be blended together into one accord.

Thorough Consecration of Themselves and of All That They Have and Do to the Lord

In order to be vital persons and have the vital groups, we must be desperate. We need to be the vital persons, the overcomers, to rescue the church from its degradation. The Lord will gain what He desires through His overcomers. To be such people we need to put aside our personal interests, our care for the necessities of this life, and make a strong resolution and an absolute consecration to the Lord. Second Timothy 2:4 says that no soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please the one who enlisted

him. If we are going to be vital-persons, we must clear away all earthly entanglements.

Praying Unceasingly That They May Be Brought into the Infilling and the Outpouring of the Essential and Economical Spirit

The secret to being filled with the Spirit inwardly and outwardly is our prayer. We need to be desperate in our prayer.... We need to pray, "Lord, make me vital! Make me living and active! I want to be a factor for the increase of the Lord's recovery." We also should pray desperately, "Lord, fill me up. Transfuse Yourself as the Spirit into my being, my constitution, and pour Yourself out as the Spirit of power upon me." In order to be brought into the infilling and the outpouring of the essential and economical Spirit, we need to pray unceasingly (I Thes. 5:17) by exercising our spirit (I Tim. 4:7) to redeem the time (Eph. 5:16).

THEY SHOULD PICK UP THE BURDEN AND TAKE ACTION TO CONTACT OTHERS, EITHER SINNERS OR CHRISTIANS

After we become vital and are grouped together in the vital groups, we need to do something... we need to pick up a burden, and then we need to take action to contact people...Once we are living, we also need to be burdened and we need to take action to contact people. We should make a list of those who are unsaved among our relatives, friends, colleagues, and classmates, and we should begin to pray for them in a desperate way. While we are praying for them, we need to exercise our discernment according to the leading of the Spirit to select two or three from our list for us to work on for their salvation. We should have the loving concern of God's heart for the salvation of sinners, and we should be burdened not just to save souls but to convert sinners into members of the Body of Christ for the carrying out of God's economy. The Lord may lead us not only to contact sinners but also to contact some Christians who are seeking, backslidden, or dormant, and gradually, little by little and step by step, to lead them into the church life. We must believe that

there are some people in our sphere of influence who are being worked on by the sanctifying Spirit to separate them unto the Lord. They need us to pick up a burden and to take definite action to go and contact them.

In our contacting of people, we should not expect to have a quick result. Rather, we should set a definite goal with a strong determination to gain at least one remaining fruit yearly, with inexhaustible patience and unceasing intercession... because we still expected a quick result and did not see that kind of result, many of us became discouraged and dormant regarding the contacting of people. This shows that we do not have the proper concept concerning the way to gain the increase.

According to John 15:16, we have been chosen by the Lord and set by Him to go forth and bear remaining fruit. Fruit-bearing is our destiny, and to bear remaining fruit every year must be our definite goal with a strong determination. However, in order to do this, we must not be loose or idle. Before the season for fruit-bearing comes, the vine tree is not idle. On the contrary, it is producing the fruit. While we are waiting for the season to come, we need to produce the fruit. We need to live a certain kind of life. First, we need to abide in the Lord through unceasing prayer in intimate fellowship with Him (w. 4-5). To abide in the Lord is to live in the Lord under all kinds of suffering. The vine suffers for many months before the season comes to bear fruit. Like the vine, we should expect to bear fruit only in season and through much suffering.

Second, in order to bear remaining fruit, we need to labor diligently and pray desperately and unceasingly. We should exercise ourselves to always have two or three persons under our care so that one of these could be remaining fruit at the end of a year. As we labor on these people, we should not be anxious or be in a hurry concerning their progress. Instead, as we labor on them, we should enjoy Christ as our inexhaustible patience. We must keep in mind that the vital groups need to gain the proper increase through much prayer and labor. As we pray for people, we should not be discouraged or disappointed but should have the full assurance that at the proper time the Lord will answer our prayer and fulfill His word to us. If we live properly prior to the season of fruit-bearing, we can be assured that at the end of every year

we will have one or two as remaining fruit. This is the God-ordained way of fruit-bearing. May the Lord carry this out fully in all the vital groups. (1993 Blending Conference Messages concerning the Lord's Recovery and Our Present Need, pp. 143-153)

BUILD UP A HABIT TO CONTACT PEOPLE

Today the church's need is shepherding. My burden is to stir you up that you may realize that today the Lord's recovery needs you to rise up to contact people. You have to build up a habit. If you do not contact people, you cannot be satisfied. You should even become addicted to the Lord's love to take care of His people.

I want to remind you to make a list of all your acquaintances. You may think that you do not know that many people, but when you make a list, you may find out that you have over a hundred people whom you know. You should pray over these names, seeking the Lord's leading as to whom you should contact. Sometimes when you contact someone, you may feel that he is the wrong person. But according to my experience, no contacts are wrong. Do not say that you caught a fish which is the wrong fish. No fish is wrong, as long as it was hooked by you. The only thing that is wrong is for you not contact people.

We can also see from George Müller's autobiography that no person would not believe in the Lord Jesus if you keep contacting him continuously for your whole life. (The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, Ch. 7)

From now on we all have to run the race by practicing to contact people. This is not an easy thing, because we do not have this habit and practice. We need to have a change in our natural being. We should not excuse ourselves by saying that we were born to be a certain way, but we have been regenerated. Our being generated made us an old creation, but in regeneration God has made us a new creation, so we must be new persons.

After regeneration, we experience transformation. Transformation is not an outward correction or adjustment, but an inward, metabolic change. A number of us were born as persons who cannot contact people easily. But this training requires us to have an inward change, a transformation. We need to

pray, " Lord, grant me to have a change in contacting people. I don't like to contact people. I don't like to be invited by others to contact them, nor do I like to invite people to contact me. I don't have this kind of disposition. Lord, You know I don't have this capacity. So You have to transform me, Lord." We have to cooperate with the Lord to be transformed.

Contacting People By Telephone

I would propose that from tomorrow morning you begin to contact people by using the telephone. Before you drive away from your home, you can make at least one phone call to someone. This will begin to build you up with a habit to contact people, to know people, and to become interested in people.

Contacting People Before and After the Meetings

After the Lord's Day morning meeting is also a good time to contact people. I have observed that many brothers and sisters contact only their familiar acquaintances after the meeting. They do not go to contact the new ones in the meeting. Thus, the new ones are left as orphans. Before the meeting and after the meeting we should create an intimate and loving atmosphere in the hall. When the new ones come in, they should be able to sense the warm care and intimacy among us. A new one may not have even heard the gospel yet. He may not even have believed yet. But he will be impressed with loving atmosphere, the intimate atmosphere, among the saints in the meeting hall.

When we contact the saints and the new ones in this way, it helps us to function in the meeting; it makes it easier for us to prophesy. Suppose I come every Lord's Day morning, yet I do not contact anyone, and no one contacts me. Then every face looks cold to me. When I stand up to prophesy, to speak for the Lord, it is difficult because the people seem so cold. After speaking a little it in such a cold atmosphere, it will be hard for me to continue. But if everyone is so familiar to me, some will smile at me while I am sharing. Their smiling tells me to "sail on" in my speaking for the Lord. We must have such an atmosphere in the church meeting, an atmosphere in which people know that we really love one another. We are really a big, loving, intimate family with brothers, sisters, and parents. Some older ones are really our parents in the Lord (Rom. 16:13; 1Cor. 4:15).

Inviting People to Home to Have Love Feast

We should also try to invite people to our home....The Lord's blessing will follow us if we practice this in a loving and intimate way. If a brother received a number of invitations every week, he might not be able to go, but these invitations would encourage him and make him buoyant....When we invite others to our home, we do not have to prepare a rich feast. We should just prepare a simple meal. We are not getting together for eating. We are coming together for blending. When we come together, we talk about the Lord Jesus, about His holy Word, and about our spiritual experiences. This kind of contact will revolutionize the church. We will convert the church into a new one.

Going out to Visit People Weekly

If certain saints are not coming to the church meetings, we can begin to visit them once a week or once a month in a regular way according to what their situation allows. We can give them some copies of the gospel tracts we have published. We can read a phrase or a paragraph to them. May be this will stir them up and give them a desire to come to the meetings. There are many ways to shepherd people. My point is this-we need to build up a habit of contacting others. We should not be limited in our contact. If we have the burden to visit our relatives and acquaintances who are unbelievers, we should do this. We need to practice this one lesson-to contact people. (The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, pp. 73-74)

APPENDIX—BLENED TOGETHER WITH PEOPLE TO BECOME A LOAF

The New Testament...tells us that eventually we all become a loaf (I Cor. 10:17). In a sense, the grains, the fine flour, the lump, and the dough are nothing until they become a loaf. After we become a loaf, we mean something and we are something in the hand of the Lord. The loaf is the group. At the Lord's table, we often praise the Lord for the loaf, the bread, yet in actuality we may not be a loaf. A number of saints among us may never have been ground or broken. Although we are grains, it is possible that we have never

been broken and ground into fine flour. On the other hand, we may be broken, yet we may never have been blended together. Thus, we are far from being a loaf. The way to become a loaf is to be blended together in the groups. The loaf is the group.

The way to be blended is by much and thorough prayer, as fine flour of the wheat, with all the members of our group, with the Spirit as the oil, through the death of Christ as the salt, and in the resurrection of Christ as the frankincense. We need to pray over all these points with much and thorough prayer. We need to be blended into a dough for the Lord. Our becoming dough implies our being broken, our being ground, and our being blended. According to the type of the meal offering in Leviticus 2:1-13, to be blended requires the adding of oil so that the flour will not be dry. It is impossible to blend fine flour that is dry; oil is needed to make the flour moist. In the same way, we need the Spirit as the oil to "moisten" us so that we can be blended together.

To be blended together, we also need the salt, that is, the death of Christ, to kill all the germs within us. We need to realize that we have many germs in our being. All these germs need to be killed by the death of Christ. Then, we also need to be in the resurrection of Christ. In the blending we need to experience the Spirit as the oil, and we also need to pass through the experiences of the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. If by the Lord's mercy we are able to experience such a blending, we will be absolutely different from what we are today. It is not enough just to put people together and call them a group. That can be done very quickly. The proper grouping with the blending of the members will take time.

In order to be blended together, we need to confess the sin of individualism and individuality. Our individualism is a kind of principle, a kind of policy, with us. Every one of us has his own policy, his own human logic. Our individualism becomes our logic. The educational system in America educates the young people to be individuals. The logic of being an individual, or the logic of individualism, is a sin in the eyes of God. We need to condemn individualism and individuality. In our church life we may be full of individuality. We may not care for others but may care only for ourselves.

Even though we may love others, we may not care for others. In loving others we may still care for ourselves. This is individuality. We need to confess this sin. As long as such germs remain within us, we cannot be one and we cannot be blended.

To be blended by the Lord, we also need to confess all our defects, shortcomings, wrongdoings, mistakes, transgressions, trespasses, outward sins, and inward evils. We need not only to confess these things but also to ask for the Lord's forgiveness. The New Testament is full of the promise of the Lord's forgiveness (Acts 2:38; 10:43; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; I John 1:9). The Lord is willing to forgive and even to forget (Heb. 8:12), but we need to confess. We should make a thorough confession so that we can be forgiven and justified. Then we can be blended.

We also need to confess our sinful nature, its defilements, its attachment to the contamination of the world, and its oldness, and ask for the Lord's cleansing with His precious blood. Although we have been regenerated, we still have the old sinful nature with its defilements and its attachment to the contamination of the world. Our inward filthy nature is easily attached to the outward world. The reason that we are so easily attracted to the department stores is that within us something corresponds with the department stores. The department store managers have prepared the merchandise in their stores to correspond with our sinful nature. We all need to experience the death and resurrection of Christ to annul our sinful nature with its defilements and its attachment to the contamination of the world.

We also need to confess the oldness of our sinful nature. As long as we are natural, we are old. We need to confess all this and then ask for the Lord's cleansing with His precious blood. We need the Lord's forgiveness, and we also need His cleansing. Forgiveness is to justify us, whereas cleansing is to purify us, to make us clean. Then we can be Mended.

We also need to confess our dispositional problems and our peculiarity in our character. We have many problems because of our disposition. All these problems prevent us from being blended together. We also have our peculiarity in our character. In general, a rough person does not have many peculiarities; the more fine a person is, the more peculiarities he has. The

peculiar traits in our character also prevent us from being blended with others.

We also need to deny our self, our habit, and our old way of doing things (Matt. 16:24). This will afford us the way to be blended together.

After so much confessing we will have no more confidence in ourselves and no more trust in our natural ability. All these things need to be dealt with; then we can be blended together.

Furthermore, we need to love all the members of our group with an equal love. It is common for us to prefer certain saints over others. This shows that we do not love all the saints with an equal love. Philippians 2:2 says that we should have the same love for all the saints.

To build up the vital groups, we need to keep the oneness of the Spirit, that is, the oneness of the Body, in the one accord according to the Lord's desire with much and thorough prayer (Eph. 4:3; Acts 1:14; 4:24). Without the one accord we cannot keep the oneness. The one accord is the heart, the kernel, of the oneness.

To keep the oneness of the Spirit we need to condemn all the self-exalting views and drop all the divisive opinions. We all have some self-exalting views. Some of the saints may feel confident that they are more knowledgeable and can do things better than the elders of the church. This is self-exaltation. Every member of the church, whether old or young, has some self-exalting views. Whoever has a self-exalting view surely has opinions. No one is without opinion. We need to condemn all the self-exalting views and drop all the divisive opinions.

To keep the oneness of the Body in the one accord, we need to forsake all self-preferences and disregard all personal tastes. The sisters are often stronger in the matter of personal tastes than the brothers. Our self-preferences and personal tastes are a great hindrance to the keeping of the oneness of the Body.

Finally, to keep the oneness of the Spirit, we need to follow the Spirit's direction and respect our fellow members' feeling. Regardless of our view or opinion, we should always follow the Spirit. We must turn to the spirit to

follow the direction of the Holy Spirit within us, and we must respect and take care of others' feeling.

For the building up of the vital groups, we need to make, with much and thorough prayer, a corporate Nazarite's consecration for the Lord (Num. 6:1-4). We need to do this until we are blended, until we become dough. All the members of a group should come together to consecrate themselves as one entity, as a group of Nazarites, to give the Lord a corporate consecration. We need to let the Lord gain our whole group as one entity for the carrying out of His New Testament economy. Our corporate consecration should not be to fulfill any kind of formal duty, but to serve the Lord according to the organic leading of the Spirit.

For the building up of the vital groups, we need to be overcomers in this age with much and thorough prayer. According to the New Testament principle, all the believers are and should be overcomers (1 John 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4-5), but the majority have become degraded. Thus, in the seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3 the Lord called the overcomers. (Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, pp. 81-86)

QUESTIONS

1. How to form a vital group?

2. What are the four basic requirements we need to fulfill after we have formed a vital group?

3. How to pick up the burden and take action to contact people?

LESSON FOURTEEN

THE VITAL GROUPS (2)

Scripture Reading:

Rev. 1:13 And in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle.

Rev. 1:14 And His head and hair were as white as white wool, as snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire;

Eph. 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church.

Hymn: 1237

OUTLINE

VII. Cherishing people in the humanity of Jesus:

A. The humanity of Jesus is His human life in resurrection.

B. The humanity of the New Man of the believers in God's new creation, is also in resurrection—Eph. 4:23-24.

Eph. 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind

Eph. 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.

C. The first way of the members of the vital group to contact people is by cherishing them.

D. To cherish people is to make them happy, to comfort them, to make them feel that you are pleasant to them, easily to be contacted by them in every thing and in every way.

E. Not by your natural man, but by your regenerated man that has been conformed to the death of Christ.

F. The model of Jesus in cherishing people in His humanity:

1. In the Gospel of Matthew.

2. In the Gospel of Luke.

3. In the Gospel of John.

VIII. Nourishing people in the divinity of Christ:

A. The members of the vital groups have to learn how to nourish people to continue their cherishing of the people.

B. To cherish people is to make them happy, pleasant and comfortable; to nourish people is to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in the three stages of His full ministry.

C. Both cherishing people and nourishing people should be by the divine and mystical life in resurrection, not by the natural life in the old creation.

D. The model of Christ cherishing the churches and nourishing the churches in taking care of the churches.

1. He takes care of the churches as the lampstands in His humanity as "the Son of Man", to cherish them.

2. He, as the High Priest, Takes care of the churches a the lampstands in His divinity, Christ with His divine love, signified by the golden girdle on His breasts, to nourish the churches.

REFERENCE

The Vital Groups, Chs. 10-11.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

CHERISHING PEOPLE IN THE HUMANITY OF JESUS

The Humanity Of Jesus Being His Human Life In Resurrection

When we go out to contact people, we must be persons living a human life in resurrection. In John 11:25 the Lord told Martha, "I am the resurrection." Martha complained to the Lord that if He had come sooner, her brother would not have died. But the Lord revealed that resurrection is not a matter of time but a matter of His person, because He is the resurrection.

The main vision of Jesus in the four Gospels, especially in the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, is that He lived a life that was human but in resurrection. Jesus was not a man living a natural life. He always put His humanity aside. He was in His humanity, yet He did not live a life of His humanity. Every day while He was on the earth, Jesus was in the flesh, but that flesh was in resurrection. Apparently, He was a Nazarene, a natural Galilean. He was in that flesh. But His living was in a humanity in resurrection. (The Vital Group, p.92)

The Humanity of the New Man of the Believers in God's New Creation is also in Resurrection

The humanity of the new man of the believers in God's new creation is also in resurrection (Eph. 4:23-24). In the new creation, we are exactly the same as Jesus. We were reborn, regenerated, not with Adam's life but with Christ's life. Ephesians 2 says that we were once dead in offenses and sins, but God made us alive together with Christ and raised us up together with Him (w. 1, 5-6). The crucified Christ was quickened, made alive, and we were made alive with Him. After this resurrection follows. We were made alive with Him and then we were resurrected with Him. Regeneration firstly makes us alive and then raises us up from the dead. Actually, regeneration itself is resurrection. Regeneration made us God's new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). This is the main stress in the New Testament. (pp. 93-94)

The First Way to Contact People

The first way of the members of the vital group to contact is by cherishing them. Because we live by our natural visitation is fruitless.

To Cherish People

To cherish people is to make them happy, to comfort them, them feel that you are pleasant to them, easy to be contacted in everything and in every way. Our contact with people must be so genuine. Genuineness can be produced only by the cross plus resurrection. Only a crossed-out, resurrected person can be genuine in everything.

Not by Our Natural Man but by Our Regenerated Man

We should cherish people, not by our natural man, but by generated man that has been conformed to the death of Christ. We have two men within us. Ephesians 4:22-24 reveals that we must put off the old man and put on the new man by being renewed in the spirit of our mind. The mingled spirit must invade, take over, occupy, and saturated our mind with divinity; then our mind becomes a renewed mind. Romans 12:2 says that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. That renewing is to put off the old man and put on the new man. We must be a new man living not by our natural man but by our regenerated man with God Himself.

The Model of Jesus in Cherishing People in His Humanity

In the Gospel of Matthew

As the King of the kingdom of the heavens in His humanity, Christ came to cherish people by shining over them as the great light and by preaching the kingdom of the heavens as the gospel by charging them to repent (4:12-17). We should be such a shining light by cherishing people in the humanity of Jesus.

As the human King of the kingdom of the heavens, Christ cherished the kingdom-seekers by blessing them with a ninefold blessing (5:1-12). Christ's mouth was full of blessing not cursing. When we visit people, our mouth must be filled up with the divine blessing. Our blessing people in this way is our cherishing them.

When the disciples asked Him to dismiss the crowd to buy food for themselves, He, being moved with compassion for the crowd, told the disciples to give what they had to the people for them to eat that He might nourish the five thousand with five loaves and two fish, having a leftover of twelve baskets (14:14-21). The disciples are like us. When it became late in the day, they wanted the crowd to buy food for themselves, but the Lord was moved with compassion for them to cherish them which resulted in their being nourished. The Lord did the same thing in 15:32-38. This time He cherished and nourished four thousand.

When His disciple rejected people bringing their children to Him, He stopped their preventing and asked them to bring the children to Him, and He cherished the parents by laying His hands on their children (19:13-15). The disciples' preventing surely offended the parents. Quite often we are preventing people instead of cherishing people. The Lord stopped the disciples' preventing.

In the Gospel of Luke

Christ as the Man-Savior came to a synagogue in Nazareth and read a portion from Isaiah that says, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to announce the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of jubilee," to cherish people with the words of grace proceeding out of His mouth (4:16-22). If we were the Lord, we might have read the law from Exodus 20 to the people instead of the jubilee of grace from Isaiah 61. To read the law to them would have condemned them. Instead, the Lord read a portion from Isaiah to them to cherish them with the words of grace proceeding out of His mouth.

Christ as the Son of Man came to eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners, even as their friend, to cherish them that they might be nourished by Him with His redemption and salvation (7:34). The Pharisees criticized the Lord for this, but His making friends with these sinful people was to lay the foundation so that He could nourish them with His redemption and salvation.

Christ as the Son of Man went to Jericho, passed by the tree from which Zaccheus was expecting to see Him, and looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay in your house," in order to cherish him that He might nourish him with His salvation (19:1-10).

In the Gospel of John

When Christ as the God-Savior was recognized by Nathanael as the Son of God, He answered him that he would see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on Him as the Son of Man, like the heavenly

ladder seen by Jacob in his dream, as a kind of cherishing to encourage Nathanael to follow Him that he might participate in His nourishment with all the divine benefits as revealed in the entire Gospel of John (1:45-51).

Christ in His humanity is the standing ladder. The ark with the tabernacle, built of acacia wood overlaid with gold is also a type of Christ. Acacia wood signifies Christ's humanity, and gold signifies Christ's divinity. This wood is the standing part; the gold is the overlaying part. To stand we need to be human in resurrection. Jesus became the ladder not by His divinity but by His humanity, not by Him as the Son of God but by Him as the Son of Man. He is the heavenly ladder, the uplifted stairway, to bring heaven to earth and to join earth to heaven for the building of the house of God.

When Christ as the God-Savior wanted to save an immoral woman of Samaria, He had to travel from Judea to Galilee through Samaria and detoured from the main way of Samaria to the city of Sychar, and He waited at the well of Jacob, near Sychar, for His object to come that He might cherish her by asking her to give Him something to drink so that He might nourish her with the water of life, which is the flowing Triune God Himself (4:1-14). On His way to Galilee, Christ had to detour to a city in Samaria to cherish an immoral woman. He waited at the well of Jacob for her to come in order to cherish her so that she could be nourishes with the living water of the Triune God.

When none of the accusing Pharisees could condemn the adulterous woman, Christ as the God-Savior, in His humanity, said to her, "Neither do I condemn you," to cherish her that He, as the great I Am, might nourish her with the freedom from sin and enable her to "sin no more" (8:3-11, 24, 34-36). Christ is the divine, great "I Am," who can set people free from sin. (The Vital Groups, pp. 89-91)

NOURISH PEOPLE IN DIVINITY OF JESUS

Learn How to Nourish People

The members of the vital groups have to learn how to nourish people to continue their cherishing of people. Cherishing without nourishing is in vain.

When a mother wants to feed a naughty child, she will first make him happy by cherishing him. But without nourishing him, her cherishing is meaningless. After cherishing the child, the mother nourishes him with food. This is the way that Christ as the Head takes care of His Body, the church. He nourishes us after cherishing us.

Revelation 1 shows us how Christ cares for the churches. Revelation is a book of signs. A sign is a symbol with spiritual significance. The first sign in Revelation shows us Christ in His humanity as the High Priest, and the last sign is the New Jerusalem. As the Son of Man, Christ as the High Priest is taking care of all the churches as lampstands (1:12-13). On the one hand, He is cherishing the churches in His humanity; on the other hand, He is nourishing the churches in His divinity. The members of the vital groups have to learn these two things. When we visit people, invite them to our home, or contact them before and after the meetings, we must be one with Christ to cherish and nourish them.

To Cherish People is to Make Them Happy, Pleasant and Comfortable; To Nourish People is to Feed Them With the All-inclusive Christ

To cherish people is to make them happy, pleasant and comfortable. We must have a pleasant countenance when we contact people. We should be happy and rejoicing. We should not contact anyone with a cheerless countenance. We must give people the impression that we are genuinely happy and pleasant. Otherwise, we will not be able to cherish them, to make them happy.

After (the cherishing) we should go on to nourish them. We do not nourish people when we speak to them about marriage, courtship, politics, the world situation, or education. To nourish people is to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry in three stages. When we speak to people about Christ, we should not speak to them in an incomprehensible way in a kind of language which they do not understand. We have to find a way to present the all-inclusive Christ to everyone. If a person wants people to eat

beef, he must find a way to cook it to make them desire to eat it. Similarly, we have to "cook" the all-inclusive Christ. There are many different ways to cook the same thing. I have been cooking Christ in this country...with about three thousand messages (until today).

In order to nourish people with Christ, we first have to seek Christ, experience Christ, gain Christ, enjoy Christ, and participate in Christ. In Philippians, especially in chapters two and three, Paul used different expressions and utterances to portray how he was seeking and pursuing Christ in order to gain Christ. He told us that we should do all things without murmurings and reasoning. The sisters who are seeking Christ should learn not to murmur, and the brothers should learn not to reason. If you murmur and reason, you will offend the indwelling Christ, who is the embodiment of the Triune God, because this God is working in you that you may work out your salvation (2:12-14). Our salvation is our gaining and experiencing Christ. To gain Christ is to work out our own daily organic salvation.

Nourishing people in the divinity of Christ

Both cherishing people and nourishing people should be by the divine and mystical life in resurrection, not by the natural life in the old creation. When something divine is operating in a human being, this human being becomes very mystical. When I was a young man, I worked for more than seven and a half years in a big corporation. Suddenly, I resigned from my job so that I could preach Christ with all of my time. They asked me how I could make a living. My answer was that the Lord Jesus would provide for me. I became mystical to my classmates and friends and also to my relatives. They could not understand why I would give up my job to serve the Lord with all of my time. I was a mystery to them.

We should cherish people by the divine and mystical life in resurrection. In resurrection means that there is nothing natural in our care for people. Anything that is of our natural life should not be used. Our life must be in resurrection. In other words, our natural life must be crucified and resurrected to become a human life in resurrection. The young people have to learn how to labor in the gospel on the college campuses not by their natural

life but by God within them as their life. This is the divine life, and this divine life makes us a mystery. (The Vital Group, pp. 102-104)

The Model of Christ Cherishing the Churches and Nourishing the Churches in Taking Care of the Churches

Christ is the best model of cherishing and nourishing as seen in Revelation 1. In verses 12 and 13 John said, "I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle." This shows that Christ is taking care of the lampstands by being the Son of Man with a long garment. This garment is the priestly robe (Exo. 28:33-35), which shows that Christ is our great High Priest.

He is also girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle. This girdle is a long piece of gold. The girdle and the gold are not two separate things. The girdle is the gold. The golden girdle is one piece of gold to become a belt. The Son of Man is in His humanity, and the golden girdle signifies His divinity. This golden girdle is on His breasts, and the breasts are a sign of love.

The priests in the Old Testament were girded at the loins for their ministry (Exo. 28:4). In Daniel 10:5 Christ also is girded at His loins, with fine gold. To be girded at the loins is to be strengthened for the work. Christ has finished His divine work in producing the churches. Now by His love He is caring for the churches which He has produced. This is why He is girded at the breasts. Today Christ is our High Priest taking care of His churches established by His labor. But now He takes care of the churches with the girdle not on His loins but on His breasts, signifying love. I hope we all could realize that in these days even among us, Christ is wearing a golden girdle on His breasts.

The golden girdle is a sign, signifying Christ's divinity becoming His energy. Christ's energy is totally His divinity. A piece of gold is now a girdle. The totality of Christ in His divinity has become a girdle. The golden girdle signifies Christ's divinity becoming His energy, and the breasts signify that

this golden energy is exercised and motivated by His love. His divine energy is exercised by and with His love to nourish the churches. (p.100)

QUESTIONS

1. How do we cherish people in the humanity of Jesus?
2. How do we nourish people in the divinity of Jesus?
3. By what means do we cherish and nourish people?

LESSON FIFTEEN

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE MEETINGS

Scripture Reading:

Heb. 10:25 Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.

John 10:16 And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd.

Matt. 18:20 For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.

Hymn: Taiwan supplement 723

OUTLINE

I. God's ordination for the believers—Heb. 10:25.

II. A requirement of the spiritual life—John 10:16.

III. The importance of the believers' meetings—Matt. 18:20.

IV. To meet being to worship God and to serve Him—1 Cor. 14:23-25.

1 Cor. 14:23 If therefore the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak in tongues, and some unlearned in tongues or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are insane?

1 Cor. 14:24 But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all;

1 Cor. 14:25 The secrets of his heart become manifest; and so falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that indeed God is among you.

V. To meet being to minister Christ to others—Deut.16:16.

Deut. 16:16 Three times a year all your males shall appear before Jehovah your God in the place which He will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles. And they shall not appear before Jehovah empty-handed.

VI. To meet being to build up the church—1 Cor. 14:4b, 26.

1 Cor. 14:4b …But he who prophesies builds up the church.

1 Cor. 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

VII. To meet to enliven man, to revive man's spirit, and to reveal man's organic function—1 Cor. 14:26, 31.

1 Cor. 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

1 Cor. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

VIII. How to meet:

A. Into the Lord's name—Matt.18:20.

Matt. 18:20 For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.

B. By exercising our spirit—1 Cor. 14:32.

1 Cor. 14:32 And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

C. With the experience of Christ—1 Cor. 14:26.

1 Cor. 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

D. Ministering Christ—1 Cor. 14:26.

E. By prophesying—1 Cor.14:31.

1 Cor. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

F. Without division—1 Cor. 11:17-18.

1 Cor. 11:17 But I give you this charge and do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.

1 Cor. 11:18 For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and some part of it I believe.

REFERENCE

Life Lessons, Vol. 2, Lsn. 14; Basic Lessons on Service, Lsn. 1; Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 2, Msg. 20.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

GOD' S ORDINATION FOR THE BELIEVERS

(Hebrews 10:25) the assembling of ourselves together refers to our Christian meetings. God has ordained the way in which every living thing in the universe should exist. God's ordination is the very law by which a particular living thing lives. If the living thing obeys that law, it will survive and be blessed. God is the same toward us who have believed in Christ. God's ordination for us, which becomes our law of existence and blessing, is the meetings. As water is to the fish, and air to the birds, so are the meetings to the Christians. As the fish must live in the water and the birds must exist in the air, so the Christians must maintain their spiritual existence and living by the meetings.

A REQUIREMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Every kind of life has its own characteristic, and usually, many characteristics. The spiritual life we believers have received, being the life of God in us, also possesses many characteristics. For example, the hatred for sin and the separation from sin are characteristics of this life. The desire to draw near to God and the willingness to serve Him are also its characteristics. One of the many characteristics of our spiritual life is to flock together, to meet together. John 10:3 and 16 show us that since we are saved, we are the Lord's sheep. The characteristic of the sheep's life is to flock together and to dislike isolation from the other sheep. Hence, the Bible says that we are not only the Lord's sheep, but even more, His flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). In order to be a sheep which shares in the blessing of the flock, we must meet together with the flock. The characteristic of the spiritual "sheep life" within us requires this of us.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BELIEVERS' MEETINGS

In [Matt. 18:20] the Lord especially promised that wherever two or three of us who belong to Him are gathered together into His name, that is, meet in His name, He is in our midst. When we meet in His name, we enjoy His presence in a special way. His very presence undoubtedly brings us enlightenment, grace, supply, and many other blessings.

[Hebrews 10:24-25 also] shows us that meetings can cause us to consider one another for inciting to love and to exhort one another for good works. This causes us to have spiritual fellowship with the saints to receive the life supply from them. Thus we must not forsake the meetings, and so much the more as we know that the Lord will soon come back. Our Christian life is not like the life of a butterfly, which does well on its own; our life is like the sheep's life, requiring that we flock together and life a meeting life. Consequently, we need to meet, and the meetings are crucial to us. (Life Lessons, Vol. 2, pp. 96-97)

TO MEET BEING TO WORSHIP GOD AND TO SERVE HIM

Meeting is for the purpose of worshipping and serving God.... If a believer is not meeting with the church, this is to say that he has not worshipped or served God in a proper way.

TO MEET IS TO MINISTER CHRIST TO OTHERS

To meet is to minister Christ to others. This point is very crucial. Most Christians have the concept that to come to the meeting is to receive the help. They do not have the sensation, the consideration, or the concept that they need to minister Christ to others. Every believer should have something of Christ. Thus when we come to the meeting, we come to share Christ with others, to minister Christ to others, either by our prayer, by our testimony, or by our word as a short message. We always have to get ourselves prepared to minister Christ in the meeting. We need to speak more on this point to impress the young ones and the new ones among us. Their wrong concept needs to be corrected.

According to the type in the Old Testament, God charged His people not to come to the meeting empty-handed (Deut. 16:16). When you come to the

meeting, you must have something to offer. Also, if the priest in the Old Testament did not offer something on the altar, he could never get into the tabernacle. Without anything to offer to God, we can never enter into the tabernacle, so this is a must. If we do not offer something to God, and we try to enter into the presence of God, this is a great deficiency.

TO MEET BEING TO BUILD UP THE CHURCH

We also need to see that to meet is to build up the church (1 Cor.14:26). First Corinthians 14 says that in a meeting the best thing is to prophesy (v. 31). This is because prophesying builds the church (v. 4b). This tells us clearly that when we come to the meeting, we build up the church. To meet is a service, and this is the building service, the building ministry.

According to Ephesians 4:16, the Body of Christ is built up not only through every joint of the rich supply but also indicates that every saints must participate in the building up of the Body. This is carried out mainly by coming to the meeting. To meet is the way to build up the church.

Every attendant in the meeting must be a builder to do the building work. But we need to consider our situation today. A number of saints in our meetings would not do anything. They just sit there expecting to receive something. But if all the saints would exercise to build the meeting, surely we would have a strong meeting, a rich meeting, and a high meeting. But if all the saints would exercise to build the meeting, surely we would have a strong meeting, a rich meeting, and a high meeting. Suppose not even one saint would function in the meeting, and everyone came to the meeting to sit there dumbly. That would be the lowest meeting, the poorest meeting, a meeting with nothing. The more we open our mouths to speak for the Lord, the more the building work will be done. The more we all exercise to speak Christ in the meetings, the richer, the higher, and the more living the meetings will be. We need to encourage all the saints to minister, to serve, for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:3-5). (Basic Lesson on Service, pp. 11-12)

THE WAY TO MEET

The way of meeting as revealed in the Bible is one that enlivens people. It revives man's spirit and develops the organic function in man. It develops from within man the initial gift received from God. This initial gift is the divine life of God, which is capable of growing within us in the same way that the life within a baby will grow. When this life grows, the functions of life are developed from within the baby gradually, causing the baby to see, to hear, to speak, to work with his hands, and to walk with his feet. However, the system of meeting in today's Christianity does not develop the spiritual function of life within us, the regenerated ones. On the contrary, it restricts, limits, and suppresses our spiritual functions, with result that they are reduced or annulled.

The way to meet as revealed in the Bible establishes and builds up the function of life in us, and it stirs up all the gifts of the divine life that the saints received from God; the result will be that they are nourished and supplied. By this the saints grow, and the growth of the saints is the building up of the church. However, I have seen some brothers and sisters among us who come to every meeting, who participate in all the services, who are very faithful in listening to messages, and who love the Lord; yet, we do not see much growth in life in them. The reason is that there is not much supply and nourishment in the meetings, and also there is the lack of the release and exercise of life. For this reason, in the meetings under the old system, it is difficult to see any growth in life, and there is very little building. (Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 2, pp. 82-83)

HOW TO MEET

Into the Lord's Name

In Matthew 18:20 the Lord said, "For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst." We need to notice that according to the Greek text, it is not to be gathered in the Lord's name but into His name. Whenever we come to the meeting, we have to come out of our self, out of the world, out of our house, out of our family, out of our job, out of our business, out of our school, and out of everything other than Christ. We have to come into His name. The name of the Lord in the New Testament means we gather

into the person of the Lord. We need to come out of many other things and come into the Lord Himself.

By Exercising Our Spirit

When we meet, we should always exercise our spirit. This is indicated in 1 Corinthians 14:32, which says, "The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets." In the meetings we do not need to exercise our emotion or mind that much. What is really needed is for us to exercise our spirit.

With the Experience of Christ

We should come to the church meetings with the experience of Christ. The New Testament does not say much concerning what we should bring to the meeting, but the New Testament always depends upon the pictures shown in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, every gathering of God's people ordained by God at the very place chosen by God was for God's people to bring their rich surplus of the good land and offer this surplus to God. God charged them not to come empty-handed. They had to bring the rich surplus of the good land, and the good land typifies Christ. The rich produce of the rich surplus typifies our experience and our enjoyment of Christ. Therefore, we must come to the meeting with the experiences of Christ.

Ministering Christ

If you come into the person of Christ, exercise your spirit, and have some experience of Christ, whenever you open up your mouth, whether you call a hymn, pray, praise, give a testimony, read a portion of the Word, or speak a short message, it will be the ministering of Christ. Christ will come out of you. This is the ministry, and this is the top service. You will become a steward serving people with Christ. You will become a divine waiter or waitress, waiting on many attendants and serving them with something of Christ.

By Prophesying

First Corinthians 14 says that when we come together, we all can prophesy one by one (v. 31) and that prophesying builds up the church (v. 4b). In Exodus 4 Moses told the Lord that he was not an eloquent speaker (v. 10).

Then the Lord gave Aaron to Moses to be his co-worker. He said to Moses concerning Aaron, “And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do” (v. 15). When Moses would speak to his brother Aaron to put some words into his mouth, God would be with Moses’ mouth and with Aaron’s mouth. Then the Lord said to Moses, “And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people” (v.16). Aaron was to be Moses’ spokesman. In exodus 7:1 the Lord said to Moses, “See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.” That meant that Aaron would speak for Moses. A prophet is a spokesman. The basic meaning of the word prophesy is to speak for someone. To prophesy, in the New Testament sense, is to speak for Christ.

Without Division

According to the type in the Old Testament, the children of Israel had to come together to one unique place, and that one unique place kept them all in oneness. Their gathering according to God’s way was in oneness and was also a preservation of oneness. The oneness among the children of Israel in ancient times was preserved by their kind of gathering. The children of Israel appeared before the Lord three times a year in the place chosen by God to be gathered together into one. As long as division exists yet we meet, that is not a profit to us but a loss. (Basic Lessons on Service, pp. 12-14)

QUESTIONS

1. Why do the believers need to meet?
2. Briefly describe the purpose and the way of the believers’ meetings.
3. Briefly describe how to meet?

LESSON SIXTEEN

THE MEETINGS

Scripture Reading:

Acts 20:7a And on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread…

Matt. 18:19 Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.

Matt. 18:20 Where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.

1 Cor. 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ.

Hymn: 863

OUTLINE

I. The Lord's Table Meeting:

A. On the first day of the week—Acts 20:6b-7a; 1 Cor. 16:2.

Acts 20:6b …and in five days came to them in Troas, where we spent seven days.

Acts 20:7a And on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread…

1 Cor. 16:2 On the first day of the week each one of you should lay aside in store to himself whatever he may have been prospered, that no collections be made when I come.

B. To Partake of the Lord's table—1 Cor. 110:21b.

1 Cor. 10:21b …You cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the demons' table.

C. Eating the Lord's supper—1 Cor. 11:20.

1 Cor. 11:20 When therefore you come together in the same place, it is not to eat the Lord's supper.

D. To remember the Lord—Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24.

Luke 22:19 And He took a loaf and gave thanks, and He broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is My body which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.

1 Cor. 11:24 And having given thanks, He broke it and said, This is My body, which is given for you; this do unto the remembrance of Me.

II. The prayer meeting—Matt. 18:18-20, Acts 1:14; 4:24-31; 12:5, 12:

Matt. 18:18 Truly I say to you, Whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

Matt. 18:19 Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.

Matt. 18:20 For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.

Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 4:24 And when they heard this, they lifted up their voice with one accord to God and said, Sovereign Master, You are the One who has made heaven and earth and the sea and all things in them,

Acts 4:25 Who, through the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, has said, “Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise vain things?

Acts 4:26 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.”

Acts 4:27 For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

Acts 4:28 To do what Your hand and Your counsel predestined to take place.

Acts 4:29 And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings and grant Your slaves to speak Your word with all boldness,

Acts 4:30 While stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may take place through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.

Acts 4:31 And when they had so besought, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Acts 12:5 So then Peter was kept in the prison; but prayer was being made fervently by the church to God concerning him.

Acts 12:12 And when he became aware of this, he went to the house of Mary, the

mother of John, who was surnamed Mark, where there was a considerable number assembled together and praying.

A. Be short.

B. Be genuine.

C. The topic needing to be focused.

III. The meetings which requires the exercising of spiritual gifts for the mutual building—1 Cor. 14:26.

1 Cor. 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

IV. The meetings of Bible reading—Acts 15:30-31.

Acts 15:30 So when they had been sent away, they went down to Antioch; and when they gathered the multitude together, they handed them the letter.

Acts 15:31 And when they read it, they rejoiced at the encouragement.

V. The meetings for hearing the messages—Acts 20:7.

Acts 20:7 And on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread, Paul conversed with them since he was to go forth on the next day; and he extended his message until midnight.

VI. Small group meetings—Acts 5:42

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ.

REFERENCE

Basic Lessons on Service, Lsn. 2; Church affairs, Ch. 5; Elders' training, Book 8, Ch. 1; The Living Needed for Building Up the Small Group Meetings, Msgs. 2, 6; The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 7, Msg. 206.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE LORD'S TABLE MEETING

On the first day of the week (the Lord's Day)

Acts 2 tells us that the early believers had the Lord's table, the breaking of bread, every day in their home (vv. 42, 46). Later in Acts 20:6b-7a, we can see that the saints had a habit of having the Lord's table on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week. Verse 6b says that the apostle Paul and his co-workers stayed in Troas for seven days. Then the next verse says that on the first day of the week they had the Lord's table. This strongly indicates that by that time the Lord's table was conducted mainly on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, the day of resurrection.

Today the whole world takes Sunday not mainly for worship but for pleasures, for sports, and for all kinds of entertainment. This is more evil than idol worship, but this tide has flooded many Christians. Many Christians not only refer to the Lord's Day as Sunday, but also consider Sunday as a day of pleasure and entertainment. We, however, should consider the first day of the week as a day for the Lord.

The saints eventually had the Lord's table on the Lord's Day, the first day of every week. This is also proved by 1 Corinthians 16:2. In this verse the apostle Paul told the saints that on the first day of each week, they should offer something of their material possessions to the Lord. This proves that on the first day of each week, the early saints met together. Today the best day of the Christians to meet together is the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. We must make this clear to the saints.

To Partake of the Lord's Table

First Corinthians 10:21b uses the term the Lord's table. We must tell the saints that the table here means the feast. We come to the Lord's table to enjoy a feast.

To Eat the Lord's Supper

First Corinthians 11:20 refers to our eating the Lord's supper. This is not a breakfast or a lunch, but a supper, a dinner. When the Lord established the table, He did it in the evening of the Passover, so it was a supper.

Here we must stress that the Lord's table is not only a feast but also a supper. A feast is mainly a kind of enjoyment, and a supper is a kind of restful

eating. After a day's work, after a day's labor, people restfully eat their supper. Thus, we come to the Lord's table not only to enjoy it as a feast, but also to take it restfully. After we eat breakfast, we labor, but the Lord's table is a supper for us to rest. No labor is implied here, but rest. Generally speaking, supper does not imply any kind of work, any kind of labor, or any intention to work. Supper indicates that the work is over, and now is the time for rest. (Basic Lessons on Service, pp. 17-18)

Remember the Lord

We remember the Lord by breaking the bread, by eating the bread, and by drinking the cup. ...We remember the Lord not by thinking about, memorizing, or reckoning what the Lord did, but by breaking the bread. We break the bread to apprehend with appreciation and thanks the Lord's physical body being broken for us (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24). (p. 19)

According to what the Lord has established, whenever we break bread, there is not only a loaf of bread prepared for us to break and eat, but next to the bread there is also a cup prepared for us to receive and drink. By eating the Lord's bread and drinking the Lord's cup, we eat the Lord's supper in remembrance of the Lord. The bread and the sup are both symbols. According to what the Lord said, the bread signifies His body that He gave for us and the cup signifies the blood that He shed for us....He gave Himself for us in order to impart life into us that we may partake of Him. He shed His blood for us in order to redeem us that our sins may be forgiven.

When we see or receive the bread that we break, we should consider how the Lord became flesh for us, how He died for us in the flesh, and how His body was broken for us and given to us that we may have His life....We should consider the Lord and what He did for us not only when we see or receive the bread which we break but also when we see or receive the cup which we drink. This cup signifies the new covenant, which the Lord enacted for us by shedding His blood. Whenever we see or receive this cup which we drink, we should consider how the Lord partook of flesh and blood for us (Heb. 2:14), how He not only gave His body for us that we may have His life, but how He also shed His blood for us that we may have the topmost blessing, that is, to

be delivered from sin and obtain God and all that is of Him. By this symbol, we should consider how the Lord bore our sins, was made sin for us, and was judged and cursed for us, shedding His blood, which constitutes our cup of blessing, our eternal blessed portion. We should also consider how we are redeemed, forgiven, sanctified, justified, reconciled, and accepted by God through the Lord's blood; how it cleanses us from our sins and washes our conscience that we may come to God with boldness; how it speaks better things before God; and how it resists the attacks from the evil spirits for us that we may overcome the Devil who accuses us. (Life Lessons, pp. 108-109)

THE PRAYER MEETING

There are two or three special matters in the prayer meeting which the brothers should pay attention to.

Be Short

First, tell all the brothers who pray to learn to be short. Ten out of ten prayer meetings are ruined by long prayers. In the prayer meeting everyone should learn to pray in a short way. The elderly brothers may have a few long prayers. But tell the new believers from the very beginning to learn to be short. For the prayer meeting to have power and be strong, the prayer has to be short. Long prayers are often padded with many empty words. When you come to a prayer meeting, you should remember to tell the brothers to pray short prayers.

Be Genuine

Second, ...the words of their prayer in the prayer meeting must be honest. Warn the brothers and sisters that their prayer in their own personal prayer time and their prayer in the prayer meeting should not differ too greatly. Learn to be real. It is true that the words uttered in the prayer meeting need to be clear. When you are having your personal time before God, you may stop before a sentence is fully uttered; of course, you would have to continue this sentence in the prayer meeting. However, there are times when the words you use in the prayer meeting are not the words you use in your personal time of prayer....Therefore,... need...to pray from their heart; ...pray for God to hear.

Do not...make prayer a kind of preaching of the truth nor...give an intelligence report to God....Speak only the words that you have.

The Topic Needing to Be Focused

Third, those who are caring for the church in various localities must make a decision concerning the topics of prayer in the prayer meeting. We need to learn to do this one thing: Never allow the brothers to pray as they see fit. (Church Affairs, pp. 90-91)

THE MEETING EXERCISING OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND BUILDING UP MUTUALLY

In every meeting we should keep the principle of mutuality. The Devil has plotted to annul the mutuality in Christian meeting. All the denominations hold their meetings with one or two speakers plus several assistants helping in music, prayer, and in reading the Bible. This is one-sided. The entire congregation is the audience, keeping silent with hardly any function. There is hardly any mutuality. However, if you would read the New Testament again you could see that the Christian meeting is altogether a meeting in mutuality, a matter of one to another. In 1 Corinthians 14:26 one ha a teaching, another has a revelation, another has a psalm, another has a tongue, and another has an interpretation. All these are in mutuality. There is not simply one or a few who function. There is no distinction between laymen and clergy. All are functioning members in mutuality. (Elder Training, Book 8, p.11)

THE MEETINGS OF BIBLE READING

“Having gathered the multitude together, they handed them the letter. And when they read it, they rejoiced at the consolation” (Acts 15:30-31). These verses tell us that when Paul and his companions arrived in Antioch, they gathered the saints together to read to them the letter written by the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem under the leading of the Holy Spirit. This indicates that we also may need to meet together occasionally to read the word of God in the Bible.

In Colossians 4:16 Paul says, “When this letter is read among you, cause that it may be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you also read the one from Laodicea.” This verse also refers to a gathering for reading the Word of God.

THE MEETINGS FOR HEARING THE MESSAGES

In the church we also may gather together for listening to messages. According to the record in Acts, this kind of gathering is not frequent. One verse that refers to such a gathering is Acts 20:7. “When we gathered together...Paul discoursed with them, about to go forth on the next day.” On that day, the believers in Troas met together to listen to Paul discoursing with them concerning the spiritual things of God so that they might be edified and established. This indicates that sometimes we also should meet to listen to spiritual messages spoken for God by the Lord’s minister of the word that we may be edified and established. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, Vol. 7, pp. 2209-2210)

SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

The Bible shows us that from the beginning of the church life there were two kinds of meetings. The big meetings were held in the temple, while the small meetings were held from house to house. The big meetings raised up and brought in the people, who were then put into the small meetings. In the small meetings they were nurtured and edified. There they coordinated together to be built into the house of God. Hence, the foundation of the building of the church is in the small group gatherings. (The Living Needed for Building Up the Small Group Meetings, pp. 19)

Every brother and sister who meets with us in the Lord’s recovery should pursue the way of the small group meetings. You will do this if you love the Lord and His recovery. As we have said in other occasions, “The heavens may pass away, and the earth may be removed, but the small group meeting, do not come in a loose way. Rather, prepare yourself. Come with prayer and with the deposit which you have picked up in your daily life. Everyone must come with his loins girded and his mind refreshed. Leave all the oldness and forms behind. Open your mouth, release your spirit, exercise faith, and demonstrate

the power. In this way the small group meetings will surely be rich, strong, fresh, living, attractive, and able to support people. May we all strive in this matter, and may we all learn and practice together, so that the Lord may have a way among us. (pp. 83-84)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the Bible, briefly describe how the believers should practice the Lord's table meeting.

2. According to the Bible, briefly describe how the believers should practice the prayer meeting.

3. According to the Bible, briefly describe how the believers should practice the small group meeting.

4. How do the believers exercise their spiritual gifts in order to have meetings that build up one another?

LESSON SEVENTEEN

THE LORD'S TABLE MEETINGS

Scripture Reading:

1 Cor. 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread,

1 Cor. 11:24 And having given thanks, He broke it and said, This is My body, which is given for you; this do unto the remembrance of Me.

1 Cor. 11:25 Similarly also the cup after they had dined, saying, This cup is the new covenant established in My blood; this do, as often as you drink it, unto the remembrance of Me.

1 Cor. 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you declare the Lord's death until He comes.

1 Cor. 11:27 So then whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord.

1 Cor. 11:28 But let a man prove himself, and in this way let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

1 Cor. 11:29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not discern the body.

1 Cor. 11:16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we do not have such a custom of being so, neither the churches of God.

1 Cor. 11:17 But I give you this charge and do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.

Hymn: 1106

OUTLINE

I. Remembering the Lord:

A. The focus of the Lord's table—with the Lord as the center—Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25.

Luke 22:19 And He took a loaf and gave thanks, and He broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is My body which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.

Luke 22:20 And similarly the cup after they had dined, saying, This cup is the new

covenant established in My blood, which is being poured out for you.

1 Cor.11:23 For I received from the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread,

1 Cor.11:24 And having given thanks, He broke it and said, This is My body, which is given for you; this do unto the remembrance of Me.

1 Cor. 11:25 Similarly also the cup after they had dined, saying, This cup is the new covenant established in My blood; this do, as often as you drink it, unto the remembrance of Me.

1. All hymns, praises, thanks, testimonies and words should be concentrated on the Lord Himself.

2. All distractions should be avoided.

B. By breaking the bread to apprehend the Lord's physical body being broken for us with appreciation and thanks—Luke 22:19, 1 Cor. 11:24.

II. The practice of remembering the Lord:

A. By eating the bread.

1. To enjoy the lord as our life supply—John 6:35a.

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall by no means hunger,…

2. To testify that we live by the Lord—John 6:57b.

John 6:57b …So he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.

3. To have fellowship in Christ's mystical body—1 Cor. 10:16b-17.

1 Cor. 10:16b …The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ?

1 Cor. 10:17 Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread.

B. By drinking the cup—1 Cor. 11:25.

1 Cor. 11:25 Similarly also the cup after they had dined, saying, This cup is the new covenant established in My blood; this do, as often as you drink it, unto the remembrance of Me.

1. To review the redemption of the new covenant—Matt. 26:27-28.

Matt. 26:27 And He took a cup and gave thanks, and He gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you,

Matt. 26:28 For this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

2. To receive God's blessing.

3. To have fellowship in the blood of Christ—1 Cor. 10:16a.

1 Cor. 10:16a The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ?…

C. To display the Lord's Death—1 Cor. 11:26.

1 Cor. 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you declare the Lord's death until He comes.

D. To express our desire of the Lord's coming back—Matt. 26:29.

Matt. 26:29 But I say to you, I shall by no means drink of this product of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of My Father.

III. To worship the Father—with the Father as the center—Matt. 26:26-30; Heb. 2:12:

Matt. 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is My body.

Matt. 26:27 And He took a cup and gave thanks, and He gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you,

Matt. 26:28 For this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

Mat. 26:29 But I say to you, I shall by no means drink of this product of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of My Father.

Matt. 26:30 And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Heb. 2:12 Saying, "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You."

A. After eating the bread and drinking the cup—Matt. 26:26-30.

B. By praising—Matt. 26:30.

1. Christ, as the firstborn Son of God, taking the lead among His brothers—Heb. 2:12.

2. We, the many sons of God, following Christ in praising the Father.

C. Praise the Father—Eph. 2:18:

Eph. 2:18 For through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father.

1. Through the Son.

2. In the Spirit.

D. Calling hymns:

1. According to the Father's being.

2. According to the Father's attributes.

IV. The persons who breaking bread:

A. "Jesus took the bread…and gave it to the disciples"—Matt. 26:26.

Matt. 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is My body.

B. "And all those who believed…breaking bread—Acts 2:44-46:

Acts 2:44 And all those who believed were together and had all things common;

Acts 2:45 And they sold their properties and possessions and divided them to all, as anyone had need.

Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart,

V. The time of breaking bread:

A. "And day by day…breaking bread"—Acts 2:46.

B. "And on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread"—Acts 20:7.

Acts 20:7 And on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread, Paul conversed with them since he was to go forth on the next day; and he extended his message until midnight.

VI. The place for breaking bread:

A. "Breaking bread from house to house"—Acts 2:46.

B. "When therefore you come together in the same place… to eat the Lord's supper"—1 Cor. 11:20.

1 Cor. 11:20 When therefore you come together in the same place, it is not to eat the Lord's supper;

VII. After breaking bread:

A. We ought to live a life of waiting for the Lord's coming—1 Cor.11:26.

1 Cor. 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you declare the Lord's death until He comes.

B. We cannot eat the idol sacrifices—1 Cor. 10:21.

1 Cor. 10:21 You cannot drink the Lord's cup and the demons' cup; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the demons' table.

C. Live a holy and sinless life and to be those who truly keep the feast of the unleavened bread—1 Cor. 5:8.

1 Cor. 5:8 So then let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

REFERENCE

Life Lessons, Vol. 2, Lsns. 17; Basic Lessons on Service, Lsns. 2-5; Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 2, Lsn. 20.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

TO REMEMBER THE LORD

Here we must say a strong word to correct a wrong concept. Many Christians think that to have the Lord's table is to remember His death. This is wrong. We are not going to remember the death, but we are going to remember the Lord Himself. The Lord told us to do this in remembrance of Him, not of His death. We remember the Person, the Lord Himself. This is the central point of the Lord's table meeting.

The Lord's table meeting is to remember the Lord, so any hymns, testimonies, or messages that distract people from the Lord, the Person, are not appropriate. In the Lord's table meeting, someone may call a hymn on fighting the battle, or in the midst of the Lord's table, someone may give a testimony of how he was rescued from his suffering. That might be good in another kind of meeting, but it is not fitting at the Lord's table meeting. Another may come to the Lord's table with a good verse which he enjoyed in his time for morning revival. He might come with that good verse to give people a good teaching concerning repentance and salvation. This is wrong. Such a teaching is not for the Lord's table meeting but for a gospel-preaching meeting. The Lord's table meeting is concentrated on the Person of the Lord, so all the hymns, all the praises, and all the speaking should be concentrated

on the Lord Himself. All distractions from the focus of the Lord's table should be avoided. (Basic Lesson on Service, pp. 18-19)

THE PRACTICEOF REMEMBERING THE LORD

By Eating the Bread

To Enjoy the Lord as Our Life Supply

In John 6:35a the Lord told us that He is the bread of life, so to eat the bread is to enjoy the Lord as our life supply. Breaking the bread does not imply any enjoyment, but eating the bread surely does.

To testify That We Live by the Lord

We also eat the bread to testify that we live by the Lord. In John 6:57b the Lord said, "He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me." By eating the bread we indicate that we enjoy the Lord and we testify that this is our way to live. This is the real remembrance of the Lord.

To have Fellowship in Christ's Mystical Body

The next crucial point concerning our remembrance of the Lord is our eating the bread to enjoy the fellowship in Christ's mystical Body. The breaking of the bread mainly implies the Lord's physical body broken for us on the cross. Eating the bread, which is to take in the bread, mainly implies the fellowship in the mystical Body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16b-17). The same bread, the same loaf on the table, signifies the physical body of Christ and the mystical Body of Christ. The Lord's physical body was broken on the cross for our redemption, and the Lord's mystical Body, the Body of Christ, is for our fellowship. Regarding the Lord's physical body, we break the bread, and regarding His mystical Body, we eat the bread. Eating together means communion, fellowship. A part of the same bread gets into you, a part gets into me, and a part gets into each one of us. This is the oneness in the Body in the fellowship of the Body.

First, the bread on the table signifies the Lord Jesus' physical body He gave for us on the cross. This is the bread which we break. Second, the bread also

signifies the Lord Jesus' mystical Body, which is composed of all the saved believers. When the Lord Jesus was on this earth, He was a grain of wheat (John 12:24). But today He is no longer merely a single grain of wheat. He is the bread composed of the many grains, including Himself. Thus, to eat the bread implies that we are participating in the mystical Body of Christ, comprising all the saints, that is, we are fellowshipping with all the saints universally from ancient times until today. We need to see that the remembrance of the Lord at His table implies His redemption, His Body, and His entire New Testament economy. (pp. 23-24)

By Drinking the Cup

We also remember the Lord by drinking the cup (1 Cor. 11:25).

To Review the Redemption of the New Covenant

Our drinking the cup is to review the redemption of the new covenant. For this point it would be good to read Matthew 26:27-28: "And He took a cup and gave thanks, and He gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

To Receive God's Blessing

To eat the bread is to receive life; to drink the cup is to receive blessing. In the Bible, the bread is called the bread of life (John 6:35a) and the cup is called the cup of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16a). Thus, to eat the bread means to receive the life supply and to drink the cup means to receive the blessing.

The cup indicates a portion-either a portion of wrath or a portion of blessing. If we are condemned under God's judgment, the cup is a portion of wrath to us (Rev. 14:10). If we are forgiven and redeemed, the cup is a portion of blessing to us. The Bible does not say that we drink the blood but that we drink the cup. This means that the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus becomes our cup, our portion.

When we drink the cup, we not only review the redemption of the new covenant but also receive God's blessing. This blessing is God Himself.

Adam's fall caused man to lose God, but Christ's redemption brings God back to man. The losing of God in man's fall was the greatest loss. Now our gaining God back in Christ's redemption is the unique blessing. The cup as a portion is God Himself as the unique blessing to us.

Through this fellowship we can see how much the Lord's table implies. To remember the Lord is not merely to remember how He was God and how He became a man. To remember the Lord is to break the bread, to eat the bread, and to drink the cup in the reality of all their deep significances.

To Have Fellowship in the Blood of Christ

Drinking the cup also indicates that we have fellowship in the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16a). We have a joint and mutual participation in the drinking of the one cup. Both eating and drinking indicate oneness and fellowship, communion. This is why we have only one loaf, not many loaves, and only one cup not many cups, at the table. One loaf and one cup indicate the oneness and the fellowship, the communion. This communion, this fellowship, is in both the mystical Body of Christ and in the redeeming blood of Christ. Because we all are redeemed by this one blood, we have the one communion, and through this we receive the unique blessing.

To Display the Lord's Death

At the Lord's table, we do not remember the Lord's death, but we declare, proclaim, display, the Lord's death. First Corinthians 11:26 says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you declare the Lord's death until He comes." Here we have the bread signifying the Lord's body, and we have the cup signifying the Lord's blood. On the Lord's table, His death is displayed, because the cup is separate from the bread, that is, the blood is separate from the body. We eat the bread and we drink the cup to display the Lord's death, because whenever the blood is separate from the body, that is death. Whenever we eat the bread and drink the cup, we do not remember the Lord's death but we display His death to the whole universe, especially to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies.

To Express Our Desire of the Lord's Coming Back

We also remember the Lord at His table to express our desire of His coming back. First Corinthians 11:26b says that we display the Lord's death until He comes. While we display the Lord's death, we express our desire of the Lord's second coming. In Matthew 26:29 the Lord said, "I shall by no means drink of this product of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of My Father." This is the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens, in which the Lord will drink with us after His coming back. When we remember the Lord and display His death, we express our desire that the Lord will coming back soon. (Basic Lesson on Service, pp. 24-26)

TO WORSHIP THE FATHER—
TAKE THE FATHER AS THE CENTER

After Eating the Bread and Drinking the Cup

After (breaking the bread and drinking the cup), the Lord will lead us to worship the Father. This is based upon Matthew 26:30, which says that after the Lord finished His supper with His disciples, He and the disciples sang a hymn. That hymn was sung by the Lord with His disciples to the Father. In the Lord's table, the Lord takes the lead to praise the Father, to worship the Father. At the end of the Lord's table meeting, we need to worship the Father with the Lord. We must follow the firstborn Son to worship the Father as His brothers. The Lord as the firstborn Son takes the lead to worship the Father (Heb. 2:12), and we as His many brothers following Him. (p.26)

Matthew 26:26-30 shows that we should worship the Father after eating the bread and drinking the cup. Verses 26-29 show us that the bread was broken and eaten and that the cup was drunk. Then in verse 30 there is the singing o f a hymn t the Father, showing that the worship to the Father must be after eating the bread and drinking the cup.

By Praising

We worship the Father by praising. This is also based upon Matthew 26:30. This is a unique verse telling us that a hymn was sung. That means to praise. According to the Greek text, we may say that they "hymned a praise" to the

Father. To worship the Father at the Lord's table, we have to sing hymns of praise to Him.

Christ, the Firstborn of God, takes the lead among His brothers to sing hymns of praise to the Father. Hebrews 2:12 says, "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You." The literal meaning according to the Greek is "I will hymn You." Matthew 26:30 and Hebrews 2:12 show us the worship of the Father at the Lord's table. In what kind of meeting can Christ sing hymn s of praise to the Father in the midst of His brothers? Matthew 26:30 gives us the answer. Matthew 26:30 is a precious verse showing us that it was after the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup that Christ took the lead to sing hymns of praise to the Father among the disciples.

We, the many sons of God, follow Christ in praising the Father. In Matthew 26:30 it was not only Christ but also His disciples singing a hymn of praise with Him. So He took the lead and the disciples followed Him. Today it should be the same. Christ, the Firstborn, takes the lead, and we, the many sons, follow Him to praise the Father.

Addressing Praise to the Father

Our addressing praise to the Father is through the Son and in the Spirit. In our remembrance of the Lord, we address all the praises to the Lord. Then when we turn to worship the Father, we have to address all our praises to Him. Ephesians 2:18 says, "For through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father." Through the Son, as the One who died on the cross to abolish all the ordinances and to create the one new man of two peoples (v. 15), and in the Spirit we have access unto the Father.

Luke 15 reveals that the Son came as the Shepherd to seek after the lost sheep (vv. 1-7), that the Spirit as the woman enlightens the house and eventually finds the lost coin (vv. 11-32). This shows the divine economy of the Divine Trinity with the redeeming Son, the sanctifying Spirit, and the receiving Father. Through the Son and in the Spirit, and have access unto the Father. The Lord told three parables in Luke 15 to unveil the saving love of the Triune God toward sinners. The lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son are

one lost person in three aspects. Luke 15 shows that we cannot be sought for and found and brought to the Father directly. We can come to the Father only through Christ and in the Spirit.

Calling Hymns

Now we need to consider our calling of hymns in the section of worshipping the Father at the Lord's table. We need to call hymns according to the Father's being. The Father's name was not revealed until the Lord Jesus came. He came to reveal the name of the Father (John 17:6, 26), the person of the Father. Thus, we have to call hymns according to the Father's person, the Father's being.

We also have to call hymns according to the Father's attributes, such as His love, His kindness, and His glory. In the table of contents of our hymnal under the section entitled "Worship of the Father," we have a number of hymns categorized according to the Father's attributes. These attributes include His faithfulness, His greatness, His wisdom, His mercy, and His love.

We praise the Son according to His person and work, but there is no work with regard to the Father. We should praise the Father according to His being and attributes. We have to differentiate and discern the hymns according to these two categories: the Father's being, what the Father is, and the Father's attributes. (pp. 39-41)

THE ONES BREAKING BREAD

When the Lord established the bread breaking meeting, He gave the bread and cup to His disciples. The disciples had received the Lord's salvation, had the Lord's life, and belonged to the Lord. Of course, only those who have this kind of relationship with the Lord, who know the Lord as their salvation, can remember the Lord and declare His death through the Lord's bread and the Lord's cup. How can those who have not received the Lord's salvation, who have not been brought into a relationship with the Lord in His salvation, remember the Lord? How can those who have not received the redemption accomplished by the Lord's giving His body and shedding His blood declare

His death through the Lord's bread and cup? Thus, unsaved people cannot and should not break bread.

Those who break bread should be "all those who believe." The believers are those who through faith have received the Lord's salvation, partake of His life, and belong to Him. Only those who have this kind of faith are able and permitted to break bread.

THE TIME OF BREAKING BREAD

[In the beginning of Acts,] the early believers continued steadfastly in breaking bread to such an extent that they broke bread day by day. At that time the believers were on fire for the Lord, loving Him deeply, so they spontaneously wanted to break bread day by day in remembrance of Him. This tells us that if it is possible, the more often we break bread to remember the Lord, the better it will be.... At first, the early believers broke bread day by day, but later as it became a long term practice, they broke bread once a week on the first day of the week. The first day of the week is the Lord's day, that is, the day of the Lord's resurrection; it is also the beginning of the week, which symbolizes that the old things have passed away and that a new life has begun. Therefore, breaking bread in remembrance of the Lord on this day is most appropriate. This is because even though we break bread to declare the Lord's death, we are remembering Him in resurrection. We break bread in the realm of resurrection, and we remember the Lord based on the life of the new creation. Thus, on this day of old things passing away and new life beginning, on the day of the Lord's resurrection, coming together to remember the Lord is not only appropriate as a convenient time but also is very meaningful.

THE PLACE OF BREAKING BREAD

The earliest believers [in the beginning of Acts] broke bread in many of the believers' homes. At that time, there were many people, so it would have been inconvenient with regard to both time and space for them to gather together to break bread in one place; therefore, they spontaneously split up into different homes for this practice. This show us that if there are many believers in one place, they may divide themselves among many different homes to break bread....[They] may also all came together in the same place to eat the

Lord's supper. Today when we break bread, we may either split up or all come together as best fits our need.

AFTER BREAKING THE BREAD

Living a Life Awaiting the Lord's Coming

Those who break bread in remembrance of the Lord should long for the Lord and await His coming. Therefore, after we break bread, we should long for the Lord's appearing, wait for the Lord to come, and live a life of waiting for the Lord. If we only break bread in remembrance of the Lord every week but do not desire His coming or live a life of waiting for Him, then we are not in accordance with the meaning of breaking bread.

Not Eating Things Sacrificed to Idols

It says here that after having partaken of the Lord's table, we cannot partake of the demons' table; after having drunk the Lord's cup, we cannot drink the demons' cup.... After breaking bread, we cannot eat anything sacrificed to an idol. When we break bread, we fellowship with the Lord, just as the Gentiles fellowship with the demons when they worship idols.... [This also indicates that] in the Lord's table, since we have enjoyed the Lord Himself and all He is and has, how could we go back to desire the worldly enjoyment and the worldly blessing? Since we have been satisfied by the Lord at His table, how could we go back to Satan to obtain anything? How could we return to Satan's world to obtain the enjoyment and blessing which Satan gives to people? Thus, after breaking bread, we should not lust after the world and its enjoyment. (The Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 2, Lsn. 20.)

To Live a Holy and Sinless life and to be those who truly keep the feast of the unleavened bread

In the Old Testament, immediately after they kept the Passover, the Israelites observed the feast of unleavened bread, removing all leaven from their living (Deut. 16:1-4). The breaking of bread in the New Testament

replaces the Passover in the Old Testament. Thus, after the breaking of bread, we should keep the feast of unleavened bread as the Israelites did, removing from our life all evil and all that corrupts us. We would only live a holy life free from sin by the Lord's holy and sinless life, which is the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, to be those who truly keep the feast of unleavened bread. (Life Lessons, Vol. 2, p. 119)

QUESTIONS

1. How do we remember the Lord in the bread-breaking meeting?

2. How to worship the Father in the bread-breaking meeting?

3. According to the Bible, explain the significance of the persons, the time, and the place for the bread-breaking meeting?

4. What kind of living should we have after we break the bread?

LESSON EIGHTEEN

HOW TO PROPHESY IN THE MEETINGS

Scripture Reading:

1 Cor. 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

1 Cor. 14:23 If therefore the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak in tongues, and some unlearned in tongues or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are insane?

1 Cor. 14:24 But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all;

1 Cor. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

Hymn: 867

OUTLINE

I. The denotation of prophesying.

A. To speak for God and Christ, to speak forth God and Christ, and to minister and dispense God and Christ to people—Eph. 3:2,9.

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you.

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.

B. In 1 Corinthians 14, foretelling not being included—1 Cor.14:3, 24.

1 Cor. 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks building up and encouragement and consolation to men.

1 Cor. 14:24 But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all.

II. Prophesying in the way of 1 Corinthians 14 being carried out in the church meeting and being for the building up of the church—1 Cor.14:23-24, 4-5.

1 Cor. 14:23 If therefore the whole church comes together in one place, and all

speak in tongues, and some unlearned in tongues or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are insane?

1 Cor. 14:24 But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all. 1 Cor. 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.

1 Cor. 14:5 I desire that you all speak in tongues, but especially that you would prophesy; and greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, that the church may receive building up.

III. Prophesying in the way of 1 Corinthians 14 causing the seeking one to excel to the building up the church—1 Cor. 14:12.

1 Cor. 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.

IV. Having the capacity, the obligation, and the earnest desire to prophesy:

A. All believers having the capacity to prophesy—1 Cor. 14:23, 31; Rom. 12:6-8.

1 Cor. 14:24 But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all.

1 Cor. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

B. All believers having the obligation to prophesy—1 Cor. 14:23-24; Rom. 1:14-15.

1 Cor. 14:23 If therefore the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak in tongues, and some unlearned in tongues or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are insane?

1 Cor. 14:24 But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all.

C. All believers needing to pursue, to seek and to desire earnestly to prophesy—1 Cor. 14:1, 12, 39.

1 Cor. 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

1 Cor. 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.

1 Cor. 14:39a So then, my brothers, desire earnestly the prophesying…

V. The composition of a prophecy according to the way in 1 Corinthians 14:

A. The knowledge and experience of God, Christ and spiritual things.

B. The utterance to speak forth what we know and have experienced of God, Christ, and spiritual things.

C. The sight under the divine enlightenment concerning the situation and environment in which we are.

D. The instant inspiration of the indwelling Spirit that stirs up our spirit to speak—2 Chron. 15:1; Ezek. 11:5; 2 Tim. 4:22.

2 Chron. 15:1 And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded.

Ezek. 11:5 Then the Spirit of Jehovah fell upon me and said to me, Say, Thus says Jehovah, You speak in this way, O house of Israel, for I know the things that come up in your spirit.

2 Tim. 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

VI The basic constituents of a prophecy:

A. The personal knowledge of the scriptures.

B. The personal experience of life.

C. Not adhering to personal experiences, testimonies, feelings, thoughts, opinions, affections, and reactions to any persons, matters, and things.

REFERENCE

The Practice of Prophesying, Chs. 1, 3

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE DENOTATION OF PROPHESYING

To Speak For God and Christ,

To Speak Forth God and Christ,

And To Minister And Dispense God and Christ To People

Beginning with Brother Nee…we come to the clear understanding that prophesying in 1 Corinthians 14 does not denote foretelling or predicting. To

prophesy in the sense of 1 Corinthians 14 denotes to speak for God and Christ and to speak forth God and Christ. To speak forth God and Christ is to minister God and Christ to people in the same way that a waiter ministers food. To dispense God and Christ into people may be somewhat different from ministering to them. It is possible for a waiter to offend people in such a way that they will not eat the food that he ministers to them. Such a waiter ministers food but does not dispense it into people. Likewise, a minister of the Word may minister Christ to people but not dispense Christ into them. A nursing mother, on the other hand, not only ministers food to her babies but dispenses it into them. Babies sometimes do not want to eat the food given to them, but mothers have a way to compel them to eat. We must learn not only to speak God and Christ, but also to speak forth God and Christ. Moreover, in speaking forth God and Christ, we should not only minister God and Christ to people, but also dispense into them what we are speaking forth.

Experienced doctors are skilled at dispensing medicine into their patients. Often, by the mercy of the Lord, I have the assurance that when people listen to my messages, they receive a dispensing. Even if they go away opposing, criticizing, and rejecting, they have received an "injection." I have the assurance that I will eventually see the result of such a dispensing.

To speak forth implies to dispense. Paul was the top dispenser. He knew that while he was speaking to people, he was dispensing something into them. In Ephesians 3:2 he said that "the stewardship of the grace of God" was given to him. ...The word "stewardship" refers to the service of God's dispensing. When we read any portion of Paul's writings, something is dispensed into us. He had a particular skill in dispensing by speaking forth Christ. While he was speaking forth Christ, he was dispensing Christ to people. The Lord's ministry today also is a dispensing ministry. When we read a page of the ministry, we cannot avoid receiving an "injection" of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 14, Foretelling Not Being Included

In 1 Corinthians 14, to prophesy does not include to foretell. This is proved by verses 3 and 24. Verse 3 says, "But he who prophesies speaks to men building up and encouragement and consolation" (lit.). Building up,

encouragement, and consolation are not predictions. Building up is for the church, encouragement is for the work, and consolation is for our daily life. For the church we need the building up, for the work we need to encouragement, and for our daily life we need consolation. These definitely are not predictions.

Verse 24 says, “But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is judged by all.” In this verse to prophesy is not to foretell, but to convict and judge people, to make their situation clear to them. When an unbeliever or unlearned person comes into a meeting, he may be confused, mistakenly thinking that he is right with God; but by listening to the prophesying, he is made clear. The prophesying convicts and judges him. (The Practice of Prophesying, pp. 8-10)

PROPHESYING IN THE WAY OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14 BEING CARRIED OUT IN THE CHURCH MEETINGS AND BEING FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Prophesying in the way of 1 Corinthians 14 is carried out in the church meetings (vv. 23-24). Verse 23 says, “if therefore the whole church comes together in one place....” This refers to a church meeting, not a home meeting or a small group meeting. Moreover, the prophesying in the way of 1 Corinthians 14 is for the building up of the church (vv. 4-5). According to our experience and observation, the best way to build the church is to prophesy, that is, to speak for Christ and to speak forth Christ, ministering and dispensing Christ into people. For one man to speak while all the others listen is a form of prophesying, but it is carried out in a wrong way. The proper prophesying should be carried out by each attendant in the church meetings.

PROPHESYING INTHE WAY OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14 CAUSING A SEEKINGONE TO EXCEL TO THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Prophesying in the way of 1 Corinthians 14 causes a seeking one to excel to the building up of the church. Verse 12 says, “So also you, since you are zealots of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to the building up of the

church" (lit.). It is good to speak in tongues, but it is not excelling. However, for one to give a short message as a prophecy is excelling. To prophesy is the highest gift, causing the speaker to excel. We must learn to speak not only so that we can excel, but also so that the church can be built up. (The Practice of Prophesying, pp. 4-5)

ALL THE SAINTS HAVE THE CAPACITY, THE OBLIGATION AND THE EARNEST DESIRE TO PROPHESY

First Corinthians 14:31 says, "For you can all prophesy one by one." This verse is one of the clearest verses in the entire Bible. It says that all the believers have the capacity to prophesy. Capacity denotes an ability by birth. Dogs do not have the capacity to speak human language; they have the capacity only to bark. Human beings, however, have the capacity to speak. We, members of the Body of Christ, all can prophesy one by one....In the meetings all the members can prophesy (1 Cor. 14:24, 31).

Many saints among us may feel that all can prophesy except them. However, there are no exceptions. We may not be eloquent, but we can still prophesy. Verse 31 does not say, "You can all prophesy eloquently." There is no such adverb in this verse. It simply says, "You can all prophesy." It does not matter how we speak; it is sufficient simply to speak. The Lord wants all of us to speak. For over five years we have been ministering on the new way to meet and to serve, but our progress in the new way has been very slow because we do not all speak. If we all would speak, immediately the practice of the new way would be among us. (The Practice of Prophesying, pp. 11-12)

THE COMPOSITION OF A PROPHECY ACCORDING TO THE WAY IN 1 CORINTHIANS 14

The Knowledge and Experience of God, Christ, and the Spiritual Things

The composition of a prophecy according to the way in 1 Corinthians 14 comprises, first, the knowledge and experience of God, Christ, and the

Spiritual things. If we are going to prophesy, we must have some knowledge and experience of God, Christ, and the spiritual things.

The Utterance to Speak Forth What We Know and Have Experienced of God, Christ, and the Spiritual Things

Second, the composition of a prophecy comprises the utterance to speak forth what we know and have experienced of God, Christ, and the spiritual things. First we need the knowledge and experience; then we need the utterance, that is, the word and the expression. We can compose a brief prophecy and then practice speaking it to ourselves at home. We may even speak it to ourselves ten times. After speaking it several times, we will know how to correct and improve it. Through this kind of practice, we will have the proper utterance.

The Sight under the Divine Enlightenment concerning the Situation and Environment in Which We Are

The composition of a prophecy also comprises the sight under the divine enlightenment concerning the situation and environment in which we are. Many among us are not clear about the intrinsic contents of the present turmoil in the Lord's recovery, and some prefer not to be clear. Their attitude is that others should be clear about the situation, but that they should take care only of enjoying Christ. Such an attitude is wrong. The church is our home and our family. If there is a turmoil in our home among our family, we cannot say, "I do not want to know about it. I simply want to enjoy." We must have the sight to see the things taking place among us and the situation of all the saints. If we cannot see clearly, we need to pray, "Lord, show me the real situation. Shine over me and enlighten me. Give me the full enlightenment that I may know the intrinsic contents of the present situation." We must know what is happening in the church, not so that we may take sides with one group.

The Instant Inspiration of the Indwelling Spirit That Stirs Up Our Spirit to Speak

The knowledge and the experience of God, Christ, and the spiritual things, the utterance to speak forth what we know and have experienced, and a clear view concerning our situation and environment are the basic preparation for our speaking. In addition, we need the instant inspiration of the indwelling Spirit that stirs up our spirit to speak. We are different from the Old Testament prophets. In the Old Testament, the saints did not have the abiding Spirit indwelling them. They had to wait until the Spirit came upon them before they could speak for the Lord (2 Chron. 15:1; Ezek. 11:5). However, the New Testament says, "The Lord be with your spirit" (2 Tim. 4:22). We do not need the Spirit to come upon us, because we always have Him in our human spirit. Therefore, we should not wait for the Spirit to come upon us; rather, we should exercise our spirit. When we exercise our spirit, the Holy Spirit who is indwelling our spirit will be moved by us, and we will have the inspiration. It is not He who moves us, but it is we who move the indwelling Spirit. If we remain clear with the Lord by confessing our failures, we will have a direct, open fellowship with Him. He is in our spirit, and we are in Him. When we come to the meeting, we need only to exercise our spirit and say, "Lord Jesus, I want to speak." Then He will rise up, and we can speak according to our experience with the utterance we have gained and with the enlightenment that we have. If we do this, everyone will have something to speak in the Lord's Day morning meeting.

We need to practice composing a prophecy according to the way in I Corinthians 14. To help us in this matter, we have prepared the book The Holy Word for Morning Revival. If we use the contents of this book with the knowledge and experience of God, Christ, and the spiritual things, the utterance to speak forth what we know and have experienced, the sight under the divine enlightenment concerning our situation, and the instant inspiration of the indwelling Spirit through the clear and open fellowship with the Lord in the exercise of our spirit, we can easily compose a prophecy and speak it in the church meeting. (The Practice of Prophesying, pp. 7-10)

THE BASIC COMPOSITION OF A PROPHESY

The Personal Knowledge of the Scriptures

The first basic constituent of a prophecy is the personal knowledge of the scriptures. To gain such knowledge, we need to get acquainted with the Word of God literally. We should even memorize many crucial verses in the Bible. For example, we should memorize the first verse of books such as Genesis, Psalms, Mathew, John, and Hebrews. We should also memorize verses such as John 3:6, 16, and 36; John 14:26 and 15:26; and John 15:16 and Romans 15:16. In addition, we need to devise a particular way that will enable us to remember the book, chapter, and verse number of the crucial verses. (The Practice of Prophesying, p. 29)

To have the personal knowledge of the Scriptures, we must know not merely the text of the Scriptures in letters, but the deep denotations and spiritual significances of the Word of God. Many people can understand certain verses such as John 3:16 superficially, but they do not know the deeper denotations in these verses. Nearly everyone can understand a verse literally, in the black and white letters, but one must have the insight, the deeper sight, to see the deeper denotations. Nearly all the verses of the Bible bear a denotation on the surface, but they also contain something deeper. The Bible is deep, and no one can understand it completely. Underneath its surface are many secrets and mysteries. If we attempt to understand the Bible in a superficial way, we will not arrive at an adequate understanding. The depth of the Bible is endless. (The Practice of Prophesying, p. 30)

Personal Experience of Life

The Second Basic Constituent of a Prophecy is the Personal Experience of Life. We must have the experience of life personally. Knowledge by itself is empty; our knowledge should be filled with our experience.

In the Christian life there are two categories of experience. The first is the personal experiences of the Lord's doings and blessings in physical things and environmental occurrences. In the Lord's Day morning meeting, many of the testimonies given are related to this category of experiences. Many saints

experience the Lord's blessings to them in physical or material things. These merciful doings and blessings, however, are not grace. Grace is not something in the physical realm. Grace is the Triune God Himself embodied in Christ and given to us as life for our enjoyment.

We need to have the second category of experiences, which are the personal experiences of God's redemption and salvation, Christ and the church, preaching the gospel, nourishing the new believers (feeding the lambs) in the home meetings, perfecting the saints in the group meetings, prophesying for the building up of the church, and other experiences, by the exercising of our spirit in faith. We should have many testimonies concerning this category of experiences, the experiences in life. Even the healing of our physical body is something in the physical realm. It is better to hear a testimony of a brother who was in spiritual deadness for many years but got revived in the holy Word, became bubbling, and went out to visit people to get them saved. Such a brother may testify that before he was revived, he could not help others to be living, but since he has been revived, everyone he contacts is revived also. This is a prophecy according to the personal experience of life. (The Practice of Prophesying, pp. 36-37)

Not Adhering to Personal Experiences, Testimonies, Feelings, Thoughts, Opinions, Affections, and Reactions to Any Persons, Matters, and Things

In speaking forth a people prophecy, we should not adhere to personal experiences, testimonies, feelings, thoughts, opinions, affections, and reactions to any persons, matters, and things. When we prophesy, we should reject our personal feelings, thoughts, opinions, and even affections. We should also stay away from our reactions to our spouse, our neighbors, the elders, and the brothers and sisters. To prophesy, in principle, is not to speak for oneself, not to speak forth oneself, and even the more, not to dispense oneself into people. Often we may dispense ourselves to people in our speaking in order to impress them with our experiences and affections, This kind of speaking is not to speak the Lord but to speak ourselves, and it is not

related to Christ but to ourselves. This is not to prophesy but to promote ourselves.

To prophesy is mainly to speak for God and Christ, speak forth God and Christ, and to dispense Go and Christ into people for people's nourishment and supply. Sometimes we may use our experiences to illustrate what we are speaking. In actuality, to prophesy is to release some spiritual speaking. In actuality, to prophesy is to release some spiritual vision as a revelation and some spiritual enlightenment as a light to shine over others, either to bring certain things of God to light, that is, to make certain things known to people, or to bring people into the enlightenment of God There are the main principles that govern our prophesying. We should do our best to speak for God and Christ, and the less we speak of ourselves, the better.

The basic constituents of a prophecy constitute a very high standard for our prophesying. This is why there is almost no Christian group today that practices prophesying according to 1 Corinthians 14. However, if we cannot practice prophesying, it is a shame....To prophesying with the basic constituents of a prophecy is difficult. However, we should do our best to speak. The messages released through this ministry are printed in publications and recorded on tapes. I believe that all these messages will remain....We must have patience and do our best. Eventually, we will come up to the standard of prophesying with the basic constituents as revealed in the holy word. (pp. 31-32)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the denotation of prophesying?
2. Describe briefly the purpose of prophesying.
3. What should be the believers' proper knowledge toward prophesying?
4. Describe briefly the basic composition of prophesying.

LESSON NINETEEN

LIVING BY FAITH

Scripture Reading:

1 Cor. 9:11 If we have sown to you the spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap from you the fleshly things?

1 Cor. 9:12 If others partake of this right over you, should not rather we? Yet we did not use this right, but we bear all things that we may not cause any hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

1 Cor. 9:13 Do you not know that those who labor on the sacred things eat the things of the sacred temple, that those who attend to the altar have their portion with the altar?

1 Cor. 9:14 So also the Lord directed those who announce the gospel to live from the gospel.

1 Cor. 9:15 But I myself have not used any of these things; and I have not written these things that it may be so with me; for it is good for me rather to die than-No one shall make my boast void.

2 Cor. 11:9 And when I was present with you and lacked, I was not a burden to anyone for the brothers who came from Macedonia filled up my lack and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and will keep myself.

1 Tim. 5:17 Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching.

Hymn: 788

OUTLINE

I. The importance of living by faith:

A. If a person can trust God, He will be able to work for Him; if a person cannot trust God, he will not be qualified to work for Him.

B. Because of our dependence on God, we have to bear all of our responsibility and should not expect any help from others.

C. Every workers should be very independent in financial matters.

II. Meaning of living from the gospel—Phil. 4:16, 2 Cor. 11:9.

Phil. 4:16 For even in Thessalonica you sent both once and again to my need.

2 Cor. 11:9 And when I was present with you and lacked, I was not a burden to anyone; for the brothers who came from Macedonia filled up my lack, and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and will keep myself.

A. The preachers of the gospel may receive from the brethren but no stipulations are made in connection with. No definite period of time is named, no definite sum of money and no definite responsibility; all is a matter of freewill.

B. The hearts of believers are touched by God, they give gifts to His servants.

III. The principle of receiving gifts:

A. If someone gives us a gift out of pity for us, we should not receive his offering.

B. If someone's giving is not first to God, but he expects us to feel grateful for him, then we should not receive his offering.

C. If someone gives us a gift in order to control us, we should not receive his offering.

D. It is permissible to designate the purpose of an offering, but it is not permissible for a work to be directed by money.

IV. Attitude toward the Gentiles—3 John 7

3 John 7 For on behalf of the Name they went out, taking nothing from the Gentiles.

A. The principle is "taking nothing from the Gentiles".

B. If in the providence of God we visit some Miletus, then we should do well to accept the hospitality of a friendly Publius. But this must be definitely under the ordering of God, not as a matter of regular occurrence.

V. The church supporting the workers:

A. According to the record of the Bible, the money collected by the churches was used:

1. For the poor saints.

2. For the elders of the local church. Circumstances may make it

necessary for elders to give up their ordinary business in order to devote themselves wholly to the interest of the church, in which case the local brothers should realize their financial responsibility toward them what they have sacrificed for the church's sake—1 Tim. 5:17.

1 Tim. 5:17 Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching.

3. For the working brothers and the work. This must be regarded as an offering to God, not as a salary paid to them—2 Cor. 11:8-9.

2 Cor. 11:8 I robbed other churches, taking wages for the ministry to you.

2 Cor. 11:9 And when I was present with you and lacked, I was not a burden to anyone; for the brothers who came from Macedonia filled up my lack, and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and will keep myself.

B. A basic qualification for being an elder or a deacon is not to be covetous of money.

REFERENCE

The Normal Christian Church Life, Ch. 9; The Character of the Lord's Workers, Ch. 9.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LIFE OF FAITH

It is a remarkable fact that, while the book of Acts supplies many minute details regarding the work of an apostle, the one subject which from a human standpoint is of paramount importance in the carrying on of any work is not dealt with at all. No information whatever is given as to how the needs of the work or the personal needs of the workers were supplied. This is certainly amazing! What men consider of supreme importance, the apostles regarded of least consequence. In the early days of the Church, God's sent ones went out under the constraint of divine love. Their work was not just their profession, and their faith in God was not intellectual, but spiritual; not just

theoretical, but intensely practical. The love and the faithfulness of God were realities to them, and that being so, no question arose in their minds concerning the supply of their temporal needs. Today as then, the matter of finance will present no problems to those who have a vital faith in God and a real love for Him.

This question of finance has most important issues, so let us devote a little time to it. In grace God is the greatest power, but in the world mammon is the greatest. If God's servants do not clearly settle the question of finance, then they leave a vast number of other questions unsettled too. Once the financial problem is solved, it is amazing how many other problems are automatically solved with it. The attitude of Christian workers to financial matters will be a fairly good indication as to whether or not they have been commissioned of God. If the work is of God, it will be spiritual; and if the work is spiritual, the way of supply will be spiritual. If supplies are not on a spiritual plane, then the work itself will speedily drift on to the plane of secular business. If spirituality does not characterize the financial side of the work, then the spirituality of its other departments is merely theoretical. There is no feature of the work that touches practical issues as truly as its finance. You can be theoretical in any other department but not in that one.

If a man can trust God, let him go out and work for Him; if not, let him stay at home, for he lacks the first qualification for the work. There is an idea prevalent that if a worker has a settled income he can be more at leisure for the work, and spiritual work there is need for an unsettled income, because that necessitates intimate fellowship with God, constant clear revelation of His will, and direct divine support.

In worldly business, all a worker needs by way of equipment is will and talent; but human zeal and natural gift are no equipment for spiritual service. Utter dependence on God is necessary if the spiritual service. Utter dependence on God is necessary if the work is to be according to His will; therefore, God wishes His workers to be cast on Him alone for financial supplies, so that they cannot but walk in close communion with Him and learn to trust Him continually. A settled income does not foster trust in God and fellowship with Him; but utter dependence on Him for the meeting of

one's needs certainly does. The more unsettled a worker's living is, the more he will be cast on God; and the more an attitude of trustful dependence of God is cultivated, the more spiritual the work will be. (The Normal Christian Church Life, pp. 140-141)

If we have real faith in God, then we have to bear all the responsibility of our responsibility of our own needs and the needs of the work. We must not secretly hope for help from some human source. We must have faith in God alone, not in God plus man. If the brethren show their love, let us thank God, but if they do not, let us thank Him still. It is a shameful thing for a servant of God to have one eye on Him and one eye on man or circumstance. It is unworthy of any Christian worker to profess to trust in God and yet hope for help from other sources.... We dare to be utterly independent of men in financial matters, because we dare to believe utterly in God; we dare to cast away all hope in them, because we have full confidence in Him. If our hope is in men, then when their resources dry up, ours will dry up too ...Men and circumstances may change, but we shall carry on in a steady course if our reliance is on God. All the silver and the gold are His, and none who walk in His will can ever come to want. (pp. 142-143)

LIVING FROM THE GOSPEL

What is the meaning of living from the gospel? It does not mean that God's servant should receive a definite allowance from the church, for the modern system of paid service in the work of God was unknown in Paul's day. What it does mean is that the preachers of the gospel may receive gifts from the brethren; but no stipulations are made in connection with. No definite period of time is named, no definite sum of money and no definite responsibility; all is a matter of freewill. As the hearts of responsibility; all is a matter of freewill. As the hearts of believers are touched by God, they give gifts to His servants, so that while these servants receive gifts through men, their trust is still entirely in God. It is upon Him their eyes are fixed, it is to Him their needs are told, and it is He who touches the hearts of His children to give. That is what Paul meant when he spoke of living from the gospel. Paul himself received the gift from the church in Philippi (Phil. 4:16), and when he was in Corinth, he was helped by the brothers in the Macedonia (2 Cor. 11:9). These are

examples of living from the gospel. Paul received occasional gifts from individuals and from churches, but he received no definite remuneration for his preaching. (pp. 143-144)

THE PRINCIPLE OF RECEIVING GIFTS

It may happen at times that the gift is right, and also the attitude of the giver; but on the strength of his gift the giver may consider himself entitled to a say in the work. It is quite in order for the offerer to specify n what direction his offering be used, but it is not in order for him to decide how the work should be done. No servant of God should sacrifice his liberty to follow the divine leading by accepting any money which puts him under human control. A giver is at perfect liberty to stipulate to what use his gift should be put, but as soon as it is given, he should take hands off, and not seek to utilize it as a means of exercising indirect control over the work. If he can trust a servant of God, let him trust him; if not, then he need not give his money to him. In the spiritual realm it is the worker who controls the money, not the money the worker. The one to whom the call has come, and to whom the work has been entrusted by God, is the one to whom God will reveal the way the work must be carried out, and he dare not receive money from anyone who would use his gift to interfere with the Lord's will as it is revealed to him concerning the work. In secular work the man who supplies the means exercises authority in the realm to which his means are devoted, but not so in spiritual work. All authority in the work rests with the one who has been called of God to do it. ((pp. 146-147)

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GENTILES

The principle is "taking nothing from the Gentiles" (3 John 7). We dare not receive any support for the work of God from those who do not know Him. If God has not accepted a man, He can never accept his money, and only what God can accept dare His servants accept. If anyone engaged in God's service accepts money for the furtherance of the work from an unsaved man, then he virtually placed God under obligation to sinners. Let us never receive money on God's behalf which would enable a sinner before the great white throne to charge God with having taken advantage of him. However, this does not mean

that we need reject even the hospitality of the Gentiles. If in the providence of God we visit some Miletus, then we should do well to accept the hospitality of a friendly Publius. But this must be definitely under the ordering of God, not as a matter of regular occurrence. Our principle should always be to take nothing from the Gentiles. When we begin to use their money, our work will have fallen into a sorry state. (p.148)

THE CHURCH SUPPORTING THE WORKERS

According to the Record of the Bible, the Money Collected by the Churches was Used

Should the churches provide for the needs of the worker? God's Word supplies a clear answer to our question. We see there that the money collected by the churches is used in three different ways:

(1) For the poor saints. The Scriptures pay much attention to the needy children of God, and a large proportion of the local offerings goes to relieve their distress.

(2) For the elders of the local church. Circumstances may make it necessary for elders to give up their ordinary business in order to devote themselves wholly to the interest of the church, in which case the local brothers should realize their financial responsibility toward them what they have sacrificed for the church's sake (1 Tim. 5:17-18.)

(3) For the working brothers and the work. This must be regarded as an offering to God, not as a salary paid to them.

"I robbed other churches, taking wages for the ministry to you. And when I was present with your and lacked, I was not a burden to anyone; for the brothers who came from Macedonia filled up my lack, and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and will keep myself"(2 Cor. 11:8-9). Here we see, the brothers love the Lord, it fills the lack of the workers and the work. (pp. 146-147)

Paul said to the Philippians, "And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I went out from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the account of giving and receiving except

you only.... But I have received in full all things and abound; I have been filled, receiving from Epaphroditus the things from you, a sweet-smelling savor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:15, 18). Where the members of a church are spiritual, they cannot but care for the interests of the Lord in places beyond their own locality, and the love of the Lord will constrain them to give both to the workers and to the work. (p.149)

A Basic Qualification For Being An Elder Or A Deacon Is Not To Be Covetous Of Money

ln 2 Corinthians 8:16-22 Paul said, "But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus, because he not only received the entreaty, but being more earnest, he also went forth of his own accord to you. And we sent together with him the brother whose praise in the gospel is throughout all the churches, and not only this, but who has also been selected by the churches as our fellow traveler in this grace which is being" ministered by us, to the glory of the Lord Himself and to demonstrate our eagerness; avoiding this, that anyone should find fault with us in this abundance which is being ministered by us. For we exercise foresight for what is honorable not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men. And we sent with them our brother... " Here we see Paul's arrangement. In forwarding others' money to Jerusalem, he was very upright in his procedure. No servant of God can ever be careless in the matter of money. What did Paul say? He said, "Avoiding this, that anyone should find fault with us in this abundance which is being ministered by us." Paul asked one, two, even three brothers to manage the money; he did not manage it himself. What did the three brothers do? He said, "For we exercise foresight for what is honorable not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men." In the administration of funds, the only way to avoid a problem is to let two or three persons be in charge.

Because money is such a serious matter, Paul, writing both to Timothy and Titus, declared that no covetous person should be allowed to hold the position of an elder (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7). In 1 Timothy 1:3 the same stipulation was made regarding the office of a deacon. No man is qualified to be an elder or a deacon who has not overcome money. A basic qualification for being an elder

or a deacon is to not be covetous of money. We must deal solemnly with the matter of money. Peter wrote in the same strain as Paul. He said “shepherd the flock of God among you...not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly” (1 Pet. 5:2). No one who is covetous can shepherd the flock of God.

May the Lord be gracious to us so that we would deal thoroughly with the matter of money. Unless we settle the issue of covetousness, we will find ourselves in difficulties sooner or later. In fact, we will become useless in the way. If we do not settle this issue, we cannot deal with other issues, and we will surely face problems and troubles down the road. We must not be influenced by money in any way. Whenever we hear anyone criticizing us, we have to learn to reject their gift. At the same time, we have to learn to bear others’ burdens. We should not only take care of our own needs and the needs of our co-workers, but we should take care of the needs of all the brothers and sisters as well. If we can handle the matter of money in a proper way, we will have done a great thing. Those who have not settled the basic issue of money can never work in a good way. (The Character of the Lord’s Worker, p.148-149)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly what is the importance of the believers’ living by faith?

2. What is the meaning of living from the gospel?

3. What are the principles of receiving gifts from the believers and the Gentiles?

LESSON TWENTY

THE OFFERING OF MATERIAL RICHES

Scripture Reading:

1 Tim. 6:17 Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God, who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment.

2 Cor. 9:6 But take note of this: He who sows sparingly shall also sparingly reap; and he who sows with blessings shall also with blessings reap.

2 Cor. 9:7 Each one as he has purposed in his heart, not out of sorrow or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Mal. 3:10 Bring the whole tithe to the storehouse that there may be food in My house; and prove Me, if you will, by this, says Jehovah of hosts, whether I will open to you the windows of heaven and pour out blessing for you until there is no room for it.

Hymn: Why grasp riches, harbor worry? —Encouragement—For Giving by Faith

OUTLINE

I. God's giving:

A. Not hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God, who offered us all things richly for our enjoyment—1Tim. 6:17.

1 Tim. 6:17 Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God, who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment.

B. As those who are saved and belong to God, our prosperity in material riches is all from God—3 John 2.

3 John 2 Beloved, concerning all things I wish that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers.

C. Offering to God what He has given to us—2 Cor.9:10.

2 Cor. 9:10 Now He who bountifully supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and cause the fruits of your righteousness to increase.

II. The Lord's Charge:

A. Not to lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven—Matt. 6:19-20.

Matt. 6:19 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves dig through and steal.

Matt. 6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not dig through nor steal.

B. Not to be high-minded, nor set our hope on the uncertainty of riches—2 Tim. 6:17-19.

1 Tim. 6:17 Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God, who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment;

1 Tim. 6:18 To do good, to be rich in good works, to be ready to distribute, to be ones willing to share;

1 Tim. 6:19 Laying away for themselves a good foundation as a treasure for the future, that they may lay hold on that which is really life.

III. The Lord's Promise:

A. Give and it will be given to you; a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, they will give into your bosom—Luke 6:38.

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you; a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, they will give into your bosom. For with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you in return.

B. It is more blessed to give than to receive—Acts 20:35.

Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you by example that toiling in this way we ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

C. He who sows sparingly shall also sparingly reap, and he who sows with blessings shall also with blessings reap—2Cor. 9:6.

2 Cor. 9:6 But take note of this: He who sows sparingly shall also sparingly reap; and he who sows with blessings shall also with blessings reap.

D. Bring ye all tithes into the storehouse that there may be food in my house; and prove Me now herewith, whether I will open to you the windows of heaven and pour out blessing for you until there is no room for it—Mal.3:10.

Mal. 3:10 Bring the whole tithe to the storehouse that there may be food in My house; and prove Me, if you will, by this, says Jehovah of hosts, whether I will open to you the windows of heaven and pour out blessing for you until there is no room for it.

IV. The Use:

A. For the need of the church—Exo. 30:11-16; Eph. 2:22; 1 Cor. 3:16-17.

Exo. 30:11 And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,

Exo. 30:12 When you take the sum of the children of Israel, according to those of them who are numbered, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to Jehovah, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them.

Exo. 30:13 This they shall give, everyone enrolled with those who are numbered, half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as a heave offering to Jehovah.

Exo. 30:14 Everyone enrolled with those who are numbered, from twenty years old and over, shall give the heave offering of Jehovah.

Exo. 30:15 The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than the half shekel, when you give the heave offering of Jehovah to make expiation for your souls.

Exo. 30:16 And you shall take the expiation silver from the children of Israel and shall give it for the service of the Tent of Meeting, that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before Jehovah to make expiation for your souls.

Eph. 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

1 Cor. 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Cor. 3:17 If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.

B. For the propagation of the gospel—Phil 1:5.

Phil. 1:5 For your fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now.

C. Supplying the Lord's servants—Phil. 4:15-16.

Phil. 4:15 And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I went out from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the account of giving and receiving except you only;

Phil. 4:16 For even in Thessalonica you sent both once and again to my need.

D. Supplying the needy saints—Rom. 12:13; Gal. 2:10.

Rom. 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality.

Gal. 2:10 Only they requested that we remember the poor, which very thing I was also eager to do.

V. The amount:

A. Giving according to the prosperity each one received—Acts 11:29, 1 Cor. 16:2.

Acts 11:19 Those then who were scattered by the tribulation which took place on account of Stephen passed through as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews only.

1 Cor. 16:2 On the first day of the week each one of you should lay aside in store to himself whatever he may have been prospered, that no collections be made when I come.

B. He who sows sparingly shall also sparingly reap; and he who sows with blessings shall also with blessings reap; each one as he has purposed in His heart, not out of sorrow or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver—2 Cor.9:6-7.

VI. The Way:

A. Give ourselves first to the Lord, and to the apostles and beseech of them the grace and the fellowship of the ministry to the saints—2 Cor. 8:4-5.

2 Cor. 8:4 With much entreaty they besought of us the grace and the fellowship of the ministry to the saints;

2 Cor. 8:5 And this, not as we had hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us through the will of God.

B. Let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret and your Father who sees in secret shall repay you—Matt. 6:1-4.

Matt. 6:1 But take care not to do your righteousness before men in order to be gazed at by them; otherwise, you have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens.

Matt. 6:2 Therefore when you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full.

Matt. 6:3 But you, when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

Matt. 6:4 So that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

REFERENCE

Life Lessons, Vol. 2, Lsn. 24; Life-Study of Second Corinthians, Msg. 48; The Holy Word for Morning Revival: Material Offerings and the Lord's Move Today.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

PREFACE

From the time that man developed a problem with God because of the fall and left the position where he took God as everything, material riches have become a critical matter in the life of fallen man. In his fallen condition, man fell into the darkness of acknowledging only material riches and not God, of trusting only in material riches and not in God, and even of serving material riches, taking material riches as God, and allowing material riches to replace God. God's enemy, Satan the Devil, exploited the fallen condition of men to come in and deceive men to worship idols, such as the god of wealth, for riches and gain. By being behind these idols, he supplants men's worship and service that are due God. For this reason, the Lord Jesus told us that one "cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). Literally, the service spoken of by the Lord here refers to the service of a slave, as we have seen in the previous lesson. This tells us that Satan utilizes material riches to seduce people to material riches, as misers, on the other hand. However, we have received God's mercy and the Lord's salvation, which delivered us from the authority of Satan and turned us to God (Acts 26:18). After we have received God's salvation in this way, we are confronted with an issue in our practical living, that is, what we should do with material riches that Satan used in time past to delude us and all the world. What should our intention and attitude be toward material riches? How, in particular, should we treat these material riches? Should we be the same as we were in the old manner of living before we were saved? Or should we have a change regarding our material riches

according to the salvation which delivered us from the authority of Satan and turned us to God? There are clear instructions concerning this matter in God's word in the Bible. (Life Lessons, Vol. 2, pp. 179-180)

GOD'S GIVING

"Nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment" (1 Tim. 6:17). This word expresses Satan's plot to delude men, showing us that all the material things and enjoyment in our living apparently come from the uncertain riches, but they actually come from God's giving. They are supplied to us from God's rich giving. Hence, we must not set our hope on deceitful and uncertain material riches, but on the very God who gives us all things for our enjoyment.

The prosperity here refers to material abundance and prosperity, pointing out that the material enjoyment of those who are saved and belong to God comes from God as a result of His prospering our material things. We ought to endeavor in our businesses. The Bible also requires that we learn to maintain good works for necessary needs (Titus 3:14, 8). Yet without God's blessing, all our labors, endeavorings, and painstaking enterprises will yield little. Therefore, in this matter of material supply, unlike the worldly people who trust only in their own abilities, we have to learn to set our hope in God.

The Bible regards the offering of material riches as sowing. The seed is supplied by God and comes from God. This reveals that the material riches which the believers offer to God come originally from God and are given by God. We are thus offering to God what He has given to us.

THE LORD'S CHARGE

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19-20). We need to look at this word of the Lord from the viewpoint of laying up material riches. To lay up material riches is to save what is left of a man's gain after the needs of his living have been met. Here, the Lord charges us not to lay up these surplus riches on the earth, but to lay them up in heaven, that is, to spend them on the heavenly

Father, doing such things as helping those in need, thus making friends with them and advancing His gospel.

"Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment; to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying away for themselves as a treasure a good foundation for the future, that they may lay hold on that which is really life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19). This is the apostle's charge, which is simply the Lord's charge to us. The rich refers to those who have excess from their gain after the needs of their living have been met. To do good and to be rich in good works refer to distributing the surplus from one's living to the needy ones. To be rich in doing good and good works is to be ready to distribute and willing to communicate. This is also to lay up treasure in heaven, to lay up as a treasure a good foundation for the future. Doing this will enable one to lay hold on, that is, to possess, to use, and to enjoy, that which is really life, the eternal life of God. To save up the surplus riches from our living on the earth is to lay hold on and make use of our natural life; while to save up the same in heaven, spending it on God, is to lay hold on and employ the eternal life of God.

THE LORD'S PROMISE

"Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will give into your bosom" (Luke 6:38). This is a promise spoken from the Lord's own mouth. If we are willing to distribute our material wealth to the needy for God's sake, He will surely give into our bosom that which is rich and plenteous, a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over. He will not give into our hands that which is scanty and limited. What a profitable deal this is!

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus which He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Concerning material riches, human beings, who deceived by Satan, will only receive and not give. To want to receive and not give is Satan's ploy, which causes man to lose God's blessing. This best way to be blessed by God in material riches is to give, not to receive, just as the Lord Himself did for us. Thus, the Lord Himself

promised us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Myriads of believers throughout the ages who have loved the Lord and believed in His word, and who have practiced accordingly, confirm the trustworthiness of this promise from their experience.

"He who sows sparingly, sparingly also shall reap; and he who sows with blessing, with blessings also shall reap" (2 Cor. 9:6). This is a natural law established by the Lord in the biological realm. This law contains His promise. Offering material riches is like sowing. Since sowing eventually brings in reaping, he who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully. In man's eyes, the offering of material riches is to give away their riches. However, in God's eyes, such offering is a kind of sowing which will result in reaping. He who offers little shall reap little, and he who offers much shall reap much. We ought to believe in the Lord's promise in this law.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10). The "tithes" are the legal amount of offering which God required from the harvest of the Israelites in the Old Testament. The "storehouse" refers to the place in the Old Testament temple where all the offerings to God from His people were stored. My "house" refers to God's temple in the Old Testament. This word superabundantly displays the infinitely rich promise of God. Although it was spoken to the Israelites in the Old Testament, in principle it applies also to the New Testament believers. If we will fully offer to God what belongs to Him that the church may be richly supplied, God will open the windows of heaven for us and pour out a blessing to us, which there will not be enough room to contain. This is a solemn promise of the Lord of hosts. We can offer to Him according to His promise to prove Him. (Life Lessons, pp. 180-183)

According to 9:6, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who sows with blessings shall also reap with blessings. In verse 6 we have the thought of sowing for the benefit of others. But what farmer, when he sows seed in his field, has the thought of sowing for others? Surely, most farmers

have the concept of sowing for themselves. This kind of sowing, however, is not with blessings. To sow with blessing is to give to others.... When we give to our money, we are sowing, and this sowing is not for ourselves, but is for others. If we sow with blessings to others, we shall reap with blessings from God.

When we sow with blessings to others, we shall reap with blessings from God. Furthermore, the harvest will always far surpass the amount of seed sown. It may be multiplied thirty or even one hundred times. This does not happen miraculously; it takes place according to natural law. God controls the life supply among His children by miracles. Because of this, no Christian family can maintain its wealth for generations. But sowing is according to natural law, not give. The more we give, the more we shall reap. However, we should not do this in a superstitious way for the purpose of gaining riches for ourselves.

The two illustrations of gathering and sowing are related to Paul's profound thoughts in these chapters. In chapter nine the deep thought is that as Christians we give in the sense of sowing. If we do not give, we are not farming, not sowing. Moreover, we should not sow sparingly. If we sow sparingly, then according to natural law we shall reap sparingly. We need to sow with blessings to others. If we sow with blessings to others, then, also according to natural law, we shall reap with blessings from God to us. This blessing will be many times more than what we have sown. I can testify that, in my Christian life, I have never seen a believer who has given to God who has honor the natural law He has ordained.

We should sow more and in turn reap more. The goal is not to make ourselves rich. The result is the abounding of thanksgivings to God. I hope that in the time to come many of the saints will become a factor of thanksgiving to God. This means that your giving will abound in much thanksgiving to God. I have the full confidence that if the saints in the Lord's recovery are willing to give, the recovery will never be lacking in material supply. Instead of lack, there will be abounding in thanksgiving to the Lord through many saints. Therefore, let us all practice our giving, a giving which is carried out by gathering and by sowing. (Life-Study of Second Corinthians, pp.

422, 425-426; The Holy Word for morning Revival: Material Offerings and the Lord's Move Today, pp. 62-63)

THE USE

1. For the need of the church-In the Old Testament, God wanted each of His people, the Israelites, to offer to Him a ransom for his soul. This offering was for the use of God's dwelling place, that is, the tabernacle and the temple (Exo. 30:11-16).

2. For the advancement of the gospel-For your fellowship unto the gospel from the first day until now" (Phil. 1:5). ...Once we are saved, we should offer to God the rich surplus from our material riches, which He gives us for the advancement of His gospel.

3. Supplying the Lord's servants—"Philippians...you sent both once and again to my [the Apostle Paul's] need" (Phil. 4:15-16). Those who serve the Lord with their full time have no time to make a living by a profession. Thus, there is a need for the believers to supply them with the material riches they offer to the Lord.

4. Supplying the need of the saints:—"...Communicating to the needs of the saints" (Rom. 12:13). "Only that we should remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10).

THE AMOUNT

1. "...According as any one of them was prospered, determined each one of them to send things for dispensing" (Acts 11:19); "Let each one of you lay aside by himself, storing up a she may be prospered..."(1 Cor. 16:2). ...[Our] prosperity is God's blessing to prosper us. We should determine the amount of our offering to God based upon the condition of our being prospered due to His blessing. Each person should determine his own amount...

2. "He who sows sparingly, sparingly also shall reap; and he who sows with blessings, with blessings also shall reap; each one as he has purposed in his heart, not out of sorrow or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7). In our offering of material riches,...each person should purpose in his own heart how much he should offer without sorrow or necessity, since God loves him who is a cheerful giver.

THE WAY

1. “With much entreaty beseeching of us the grace and the fellowship of the ministry to the saints; and ...they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us through the will of God” (2 Cor. 8:4-5). ...The offering of material riches which is most acceptable to the Lord is the offering of ourselves first to the Lord and then to the apostles, who are concerned for us, eventually asking them for a share in such grace and fellowship.

2. “But take heed not to do your righteousness [giving alms]before men to be gazed at by them; otherwise, you surely have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens. When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward. But you, when you give alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall repay you” (Matt. 6:1-4). For whatever use we offer our material riches, we must not do it intentionally for others to see in order that we may be glorified and rewarded by men; otherwise, we will not be rewarded by the Father, who is in the heavens. ...We should offer in secret that the heavenly Father, who sees what we do, may repay us, recompensing and rewarding us.... Either named donations or open contributions must be avoided. (Life Lessons, vol. 2, Lsn. 24)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly what should be the proper attitude toward material offering.

2. What are the uses of the material riches offered by the believers?

3. What are the practical points that we should pay attention to concerning material offerings?

LESSON TWENTY-ONE

THE LEADERSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Scripture Reading:

Rev. 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood.

1 Pet. 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly;

1 Pet. 5:3 Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.

Heb. 13:17 Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.

Hymn: 495

OUTLINE

I. The headship of Christ:

A. Christ having been made Lord and Christ by God—Acts 2:36.

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.

B. Christ having been exalted as the Leader over all the rulers—Acts 5:31.

Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

C. Christ having been made the ruler of the kings of the earth—Rev. 1:5.

Rev. 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood.

D. Christ having been appointed to be the Head over all things to the

church—Eph. 1:22.

Eph. 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church.

E. Christ being the Head of the church—Col. 1:18.

Col. 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things.

F. Christ being the Head of every man under the Headship of God—1 Cor. 11:3.

1 Cor. 11:3 But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ.

II. The leadership in the church life:

A. The elders taking the lead diligently in the church life—Heb. 13:24; 12:8.

Heb. 13:24 Greet all the ones leading you and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

Rom. 12:8 Or he who exhorts, in that exhortation; he who gives, in simplicity; he who leads, in diligence; he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness.

B. The elder laboring in teaching the saints—1 Tim. 5:17; 3:2.

1 Tim. 5:17 Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching.

1 Tim. 3:2 The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach.

C. The elders shepherding the church as the flock of God, overseeing it according to God, and becoming patterns of the flock, not lording over the flock—1 Pet. 5 :2-3.

1 Pet. 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly;

1 Pet. 5:3 Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.

D. To be regarded, obeyed, and honored by the saints—1 Thes. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 5:17.

1 Thes. 5:12 Furthermore we ask you, brothers, to acknowledge those who labor among you and take the lead among you in the Lord and admonish you,

1 Thes. 5:13 And to regard them most highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

Heb. 13:17 Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.

1 Tim. 5:17 Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching.

III. The leadership in the ministry:

A. Peter taking the lead in the New Testament ministry among the Jews—Gal.2:7b.

Gal. 2:7b …Even as Peter with the gospel to the circumcision.

B. Paul taking the lead in the New Testament ministry among the Gentiles—Gal.2:7a; Rom. 11:13.

Gal. 2:7a But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcision…

Rom. 11:13 But I am speaking to you, the Gentiles. Inasmuch therefore as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry.

C. The leadership in the New Testament ministry, being in the New Testament teaching more than in the leading ones of the New Testament ministry:

1. The leading ones being no strict in directing the move of their co-workers—cf. 1 Cor. 16:12.

1 Co. 16:12 And concerning our brother Apollos, I urged him many times to come to you with the brothers; yet it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.

2. The leading ones being not strict in the teaching of the New Testament ministry—cf. 1Tim. 1:3-4; 2 John 9-11.

1 Tim. 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

1 Tim. 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

2 John 9 Everyone who goes beyond and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

2 John 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive

him into your house, and do not say to him, Rejoice!

2 John 11 For he who says to him, Rejoice, shares in his evil works.

D. God's delegated authority in the leading ones:

1. For building up and not for overthrowing—2 Cor. 13:10.

2 Cor. 13:10 Therefore I write these things while being absent in order that when present I would not have to use severity, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for overthrowing.

2. In their teachings—1 Cor. 4:17b-21; 7:17b; 16:1; 11:2; 2 Thes. 3:6, 9, 12, 14.

1 Cor. 4:17b …Who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Cor. 4:18 Now some have become puffed up as though I were not coming to you.

1 Cor. 4:19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will ascertain not the speech of those who are puffed up but the power.

1 Cor. 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not in speech but in power.

1 Cor. 4:21 What do you want? Should I come to you with a rod or in love and a spirit of meekness?

1 Cor. 7:17b …And so I direct in all the churches.

1 Cor. 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, just as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also do.

1 Cor. 11:2 But I praise you because in all things you have remembered me and hold fast the things that I have handed down even as I handed them down to you.

2 Thes. 3:6 Now we charge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother walking disorderly and not according to the things which were handed down to you and which you received from us.

2 Thes. 3:9 Not because we do not have the right, but in order that we might give ourselves to you as a pattern that you might imitate us.

2 Thes. 3:12 Now such ones we charge and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work with quietness and eat their own bread.

2 Thes. 3:14 And if anyone does not obey our word through this letter, mark this one so as not to mingle with him, in order that he may be ashamed.

3. In their dealing with the problems and affairs of the churches—1 Cor. 1:10; 5:11-13; 11:34b.

1 Cor. 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

1 Cor. 5:11 But now I have written to you not to mingle with anyone who is called a brother, if he is a fornicator or a covetous man or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or a rapacious man, with such a one not even to eat.

1 Cor. 5:12 For what have I to do with judging those who are outside the church? Do you not judge those who are within the church?

1 Cor. 5:13 But those who are outside, God will judge. Remove the evil man from among yourselves.

1 Cor. 11:34b ...And the rest I will set in order when I come.

4. In their avenging of the saints' disobedience—2 Cor. 10:6.

2 Cor. 10:6 And we are ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

5. In their appointing of and dealing with the elders—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Tim. 5:19-20.

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church and had prayed with fastings, they committed them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in Crete, that you might set in order the things which I have begun that remain and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you:

1 Tim.5:19 Against an elder do not receive an accusation, except based upon two or three witnesses.

1 Tim.5:20 The ones who sin reprove before all that the rest also may have fear.

IV. God's government in the administration of the churches:

A. Not autocracy nor democracy, but theocracy.

B. The theocratic government among the people of Israel in the Old Testament:

1. Through the priesthood with the Urim and the Thummim—Exo. 28:29-30; Num. 27:15-23.

Exo. 28:29 So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart when he goes into the sanctuary, for a memorial before Jehovah continually.

Exo. 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.

Num. 27:15 And Moses spoke to Jehovah, saying,

Num. 27:16 Let Jehovah, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly,

Num. 27:17 Who will go out before them and who will come in before them, and who will lead them out and who will bring them in; so that the assembly of Jehovah will not be like sheep which have no shepherd.

Num. 27:18 And Jehovah said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him;

Num. 27:19 And set him before Eleazar the priest and before the whole assembly, and give him a charge in their sight.

Num. 27:20 And you shall put some of your honor upon him, so that the whole assembly of the children of Israel may obey him.

Num. 27:21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah. At his word shall they go out and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even the whole assembly.

Num. 27:22 And Moses did as Jehovah commanded him, and he took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before the whole assembly.

Num. 27:23 And he laid his hands upon him and gave him a charge just as Jehovah had spoken through Moses.

2. Through the coordination of the prophets—1 Sam. 3:1; 19-21.

1 Sam. 3:1 And the boy Samuel ministered to Jehovah before Eli. Now the word of Jehovah was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

1 Sam. 3:19 And Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

1 Sam. 3:20 And all Israel, from Dan. to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of Jehovah.

1 Sam. 3:21 And Jehovah continued to appear in Shiloh, for Jehovah revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah.

C. The theocratic government in the churches in the New Testament:

1. Through the Spirit who dwells in the spirits of the apostles and the elders, both of whom are the New Testament priests with the revelation of the New Testament teaching—Acts 15:6, 23, 28; 2:42; 1 Thes. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17.

Acts 15:6 . And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to see about this matter.

Acts 15:23 Writing to them and sending by their hand the following: The apostles and the elder brothers, to the brothers throughout Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are of the Gentiles, rejoice.

Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

1 Thes. 5:12 Furthermore we ask you, brothers, to acknowledge those who labor among you and take the lead among you in the Lord and admonish you,

1 Tim. 3:2 The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach;

1 Tim. 5:17 Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching.

2. Through the coordination of the New Testament prophets—Acts 13:1.

Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

III. The leading ones among the believers—Heb. 13:17.

Heb. 13:17 Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.

REFERENCE

The Apostle's Teaching and the New Testament Leadership, Ch. 2; Truth Messages, Ch. 3

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

Christ Having Been Made Lord and Christ by God

Concerning the New Testament leadership, the Bible firstly speaks of the headship of Christ. The unique Head of the entire universe is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ was made Lord and Christ by God (Acts 2:36). As God, the Lord was the Lord all the time (Luke 1:43; John 11:21; 20:28). However, in His

incarnation He became a man; the Creator became a creature. As man, He was made the Lord in His ascension after He brought His humanity into God in His resurrection. Moreover, as God's sent and anointed One, He was Christ from the time He was born (Luke 2:11; Matt. 1:16; John 1:41; Matt. 16:16), but as such a One, He was officially made the very Christ of God in His ascension.

If one does not have Jesus, he does not have an owner. Jesus was also made the Christ...to carry out God's commission, His plan and eternal economy. The Lord is the owner, and Christ is the doer. He is the One who owns all things, and He is the One who fulfills God's commission.

Christ Having Been Exalted as the Leader over All the Rulers

Acts 5:31 says, "This One God has exalted to His right hand as a Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." The way He saves us is by being the Leader. Because He controls all things, He has the power, authority, ability, and capacity to save us. Under His leadership we have been saved. He has the authority and power, if He should so desire, to remove a king in order to save even one of His people. The account of Pharaoh and the people of Israel in Exodus is a demonstration of the Lord's authority and power to save. In Egypt, Pharaoh kept all the children of Israel in slavery, and God sent Moses to tell Pharaoh to let His people go (Exo. 5:1). When Pharaoh refused, the Lord brought the plagues upon him, and he asked Moses to entreat the Lord for him (Exo. 8:8, 28; 9:27-28; 10:16-17). Eventually, Pharaoh was subdued, and he released the people of Israel (Exo. 11:1; 12:31). The Savior saved His people through His power and authority.

The Lord's authority and power as the Leader over all the rulers can be seen in His control over the world situation. My intention since the early 1940s was to evangelize the northwest portions of China and Mongolia. I never thought that I would eventually come to America. However, due to the Lord's sovereignty in the world situation, I am here today. The One who brought me to this country was the Leader over all the rulers.

Christ Having Been Made

the Ruler of the Kings of the Earth

Christ has been the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5). On the earth there have been many kings, queens, and presidents, but the Ruler of all these is Christ. God made Christ the Ruler and exalted Him as the Leader.

Christ Having Been Appointed to Be the Head over All Things to the Church and Being the Head of the Church

Moreover, God has appointed Christ to be the Head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). Whatever Christ is, is to the church. Christ is the Head of the church (Col. 1:18). Whatever the Head is, is transmitted to the church by the circulation of life in the Body.

Christ Being the Head of Every Man under the Headship of God

Christ is also the Head of every man under the headship of God (1 Cor. 11:3). Christ is the Head of the church corporately and the Head of every man individually. Still He Himself is under the headship of God. What a marvelous order there is in the universe. God is over Christ, and Christ is over all things. As the Head of all things, He is the Head of the church and the Head of every man.

THE LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH LIFE

The New Testament leadership comprises the elders in the church and those who take the lead in the ministry. It is not right to say that there is no leadership in the church. Even in the proper family life there is a leadership. When the parents are away from home, the oldest brother or sister is left as a leader for the other children. If both the parents and the older children are away, a baby-sister is left with the remaining children to be a leader for them. In every situation there is the need for a leader. In the church life the elders take the lead diligently (Heb. 13:24; Rom. 12:8). All the elders are the leading ones in the church. Without leaders we could not have an orderly church life

with so many arrangements. Rather, we would have confusion in the church life.

The leadership in the church life is carried out by the elders' laboring in teaching the saints (1 Tim.5:17;3:2) and their shepherding the church as the flock of God, overseeing it according to God, and becoming patterns of the flock, not lording it over the flock(1 Pet. 5:2-3). The leaders in the church must take the lead in all things. They must be the leading sheep, the head sheep, in the flock. When the sheep at the head of the flock move, the rest of the sheep follow. However, when the sheep in the front do nothing, the whole flock stops. If the restrooms in the meeting hall need to be cleaned, the elders should take the lead to clean them. The elders should also be the first ones to go out to visit people for the gospel by knocking on their doors. If the elders go out to preach the gospel, many in the church will follow them.

The elders should be regarded, obeyed, and honored by the saints (1 Thes. 5:12 13; Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 5:17). The honor given the elders may include material supply. Some elders do not take a job for their living because they are too busy in the matters of the church. They do not have an income; they live by faith. The saints should honor them by giving them some material supply. This is the proper order with a proper, beautiful situation in the church life.

THE LEADERSHIP IN THE MINISTRY

Peter Taking the Lead in the New Testament Ministry among the Jews And Paul Taking the Lead in the New Testament Ministry among the Gentiles

The New Testament leadership also comprises the leadership in the ministry. Peter took the lead in the New Testament ministry among the Jews (Gal. 2:7b). We can see Peter's lead in the ministry in the first twelve chapters of among the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7a; Rom. 11:13) in the last sixteen chapters of Acts.

The Leadership in the New Testament Ministry Being in the New Testament Teaching

More Than in the Leading Ones of the new Testament Ministry

The leadership in the New Testament ministry is in the New Testament teaching more than in the leading ones of the New Testament ministry. In [America] the leadership of the country is in the constitution more than in the presidency. The critical factor in the government is the constitution. Likewise, the New Testament leadership was not in Peter or in Paul as much as it was in their teaching. If Peter or Paul would have turned from their teaching, the saints would not have followed them. The churches followed the apostles' teaching, and they followed the apostles because the apostles had the New Testament teaching. The apostles kept their teaching, they were in their teaching, and they were one with it.

The leading ones in the ministry were not strict in directing the move of their co-workers [cf. 1 Cor. 16:12].... The leading ones were strict, however, in the teaching of the New Testament (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 2 John 9-11)....The apostles were not strict in directing a co-worker such as Apollos to go to a certain place. However, they were very strict concerning the New Testament teaching. This proves that the real leadership in the ministry is in the apostle' teaching.

God Delegated Authority in the Leading Ones

The New Testament shows us God's delegated authority in the leading ones in the ministry. In a family there is delegated authority, and in human government there is also delegated authority. Without delegated authorities, the whole earth would be in anarchy and disorder and would be unsuitable for living in. today a wind of teaching is blowing in the Lord's recovery, saying that there is no delegated authority in the church. According to this teaching, Brother Nee was wrong in his book Authority and Submission. If Brother Nee was wrong, the Bible is also wrong because the Bible strongly reveals God's delegated authority in the church life and in the ministry.

God's delegated authority in the leading ones in the ministry was for building up and not for overthrowing (2 Cor. 13:10). Paul had authority, not to destroy or overthrow, but for building up. God's delegated authority was in the teaching of the leading ones (1 Cor. 4:17b-21; 7:17b; 16:1; 11:2; 2 Thes. 3:6,

9, 12, 14). Paul exercised his authority in his teaching. He taught the same thing everywhere in every church (1 Cor. 4:17b), and the churches followed his speaking. This was the demonstration of Paul's delegated authority. Authority always follows the proper speaking. A teacher's speaking in a school is with authority. When the teacher speaks, all the students are under his authority.

The leadership in the ministry was in the leading one's dealing with the problems and affairs of the churches (1 Cor. 1:10; 5:11-13; 11:34b). Paul was strong in dealing with the church in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 4:21 he said, "What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of meekness?" In 11:34 he said, "And the remaining matters I will set in order when I come."

The leadership in the ministry was also in the leading one' avenging of the saints' disobedience (2 Cor. 10:6). In 2 Corinthians 10:6 Paul said, "And being ready to avenge all disobedience, whenever your obedience is fulfilled." Paul intended to avenge all disobedience when the Corinthians themselves had learned obedience.

The leadership in the ministry was also in the appointing of and dealing with the elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Tim. 5:19-20). First Timothy 5:19-20 shows that not only did the apostles have the authority to appoint the elders, but they also had the authority to judge them, including the authority to remove them. This shows us that the apostles were delegated authority of God.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHURCHES

Even among the children of Israel in the Old Testament, God had a government for His administration to fulfill His purpose. God also has His government in the administration of the churches in the New Testament.

Not Autocracy nor Democracy, But Theocracy

God's government is neither autocracy nor democracy, but theocracy. Autocracy is dictatorship, and democracy is government by the people. Humanly speaking, democracy is wonderful, but to bring democracy into the

church brings in the opinions of the people. This is like the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3. The word Laodicea in Greek means "the opinion of the people." In the United States government, congressmen and senators represent the states to express the people's opinion. God's government in the church is not like this. God's government in the church is theocratic.

The Theocratic Government among the People of Israel in the Old Testament

The theocratic government among the people of Israel in the Old Testament was through the priesthood with the Urim and the Thummim (Exo. 28:29-30; Num. 27:15-23). The priests in the priesthood were very close to God, even one with God. God could open Himself to them, and they could open themselves to God so that there could be a mutual understanding between them and God. They had the ability, the capacity, to receive God's revelation, God's speaking, God's oracle.

The high priest wore a breastplate with twelve precious stones bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Two items were added to the breastplate called Urim and Thummim. Urim means light, and Thummim means perfection. The Urim was something that enlightened the stones on the breastplate. The twelve names of Israel on the twelve stones only occupied eighteen of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Therefore, there was a shortage of four Hebrew letters on the breastplate. The Thummim was something added to the breastplate that bore these four additional letters to make the Hebrew alphabet complete on the breastplate. This is perfection.

When the high priest came into the presence of God, he received the speaking of God by means of the shining of the Urim on the twelve stones of the breastplate with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, including the Thummim. The breastplate was like a typewriter to form words, phrases, and sentences. Thus, God spoke to the children of Israel through the high priest with the Urim and Thummim. (For more details regarding the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim, see Message 123 -129 of the Life-study of Exodus.)

The theocratic government among the people of Israel in the Old Testament was also through the coordination of the prophets (1 Sam. 3:1, 19-21). The prophets were a strengthening to the priesthood when the priesthood was not strong. This is why there was the need of both priests and prophets.

The Theocratic Government in the Churches in the New Testament

The theocratic government in the churches in the New Testament is through the Spirit who dwells in the spirits of the apostles and the elders, both of whom are the New Testament priests, with the revelation of the New Testament teaching (Acts 15:6,234,28; 2:42; 1 Thes. 5:12; 1Tim. 3:2; 5:17). The Urim and Thummim on the breastplate of the high priest in the Old Testament typify the unveiling Spirit, the Holy Spirit, indwelling our receiving spirit, our regenerated spirit. These two spirits mingled together are today's Urim and Thummim. Whenever the apostles and the elders as the New Testament priests come to the Lord and wait on Him for His administration in the church, they will surely receive some light and some word from the Lord. By this way we have God's speaking in the administration of the church to carry out His theocratic government.

Now we need to consider the practical application of this fellowship in a local church. Whenever the elders of a local church come for the Lord, they come as priests. Because they bear the responsibility of the eldership, they want to know how to take the lead, how to teach, how to shepherd, how to oversee, and how to be patterns. Therefore, they have to pray together, to wait on the Lord. As they pray and fellowship, the indwelling Spirit will speak and enlighten them inwardly. In their regenerated spirit, they will receive something of the Lord. Then they will realize how the Lord wants them to take the lead, to shepherd, to oversee, and to be patterns. Because this may not be so adequate or strong, there are the prophets in the churches. The prophets' speaking strengthens the elder's understanding of the will of God. The functioning of the elders and the prophets in this way constitutes a kind of government for the administration of God in His church to fulfill His eternal purpose. (The Apostle's Teaching and the New Testament Leadership, pp. 21-30)

OBEY THE LEADING ONES

Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will give account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable to you,” We all need to obey the leading ones. This does not mean that the elders exercise authority over us; it means that as those who are older and more experienced, they take the lead and we need to follow them. To obey means to follow.

Regarding elders, Peter says, “Neither as lording over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3, Gk.). The elders are to take the lead by being an example, not by lording it over the saints. If the elders see that the floor has not been vacuumed, they should not sit on the throne and summon the servants to vacuum it for them. Instead, they should take the lead to vacuum the floor and thereby set an example for others to follow.

Although the elders should not lord it over God’s flock, Peter does say, “Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder” (1 Pet. 5:5). Moreover, there are times when the older ones need to submit to the younger ones. As Peter says, “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility” (1 Pet. 5:5). Thus, not only the young ones submit to the older ones, but all, including the older ones, submit to one another in humility. What a beautiful picture this is! It is absolutely different from the natural concept of leadership in the fallen mentality. The leadership in the church is not that of Nimrod, who built the city of Babel. Rather, it is a leadership that builds up the Body. (Truth Messages, p. 34)

QUESTIONS

1. Concerning the New Testament leadership, describe briefly the headship of Christ.

2. Who are included in the New Testament leadership and how do they take the lead?

3. Describe briefly God’s government in the administration of the churches.

LESSON TWENTY-TWO

THE LEARNING OF COORDINATION

Scripture Reading:

1 Cor. 12:24b-25 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked, That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.

Phil. 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing.

Hymn:

OUTLINE

I. The meaning of coordination:

A. The coordination is everyone's portion is there, but coordinates together—cf. 1 Cor. 12:14-22.

1 Cor. 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.

1 Cor. 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.

1 Cor. 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.

1 Cor. 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?

1 Cor. 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.

1 Cor. 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?

1 Cor. 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.

1 Cor. 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

1 Cor. 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

B. The plurality of elders shows the need for coordination—Titus 1:5, 1 Pet. 5:1.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in Crete, that you might set in order the things which I have begun that remain and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you.

1 Pet. 5:1 Therefore the elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory to be revealed.

II. The way of coordination:

A. Learning to accept authority—Acts 15:3.

Acts 15:3 They therefore, having been sent forward by the church, passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, telling in detail about the turning of the Gentiles; and they brought great joy to all the brothers.

B. Willing to be broken.

C. To be open—Acts 15:6.

Acts 15:6 And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to see about this matter.

D. Humble yet not passive—Gal. 2:14; 2 Pet. 3:15-16.

Gal. 2:14 But when I saw that they were not walking in a straightforward way in relation to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like the Jews?

2 Pet. 3:15 And count the long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation, even as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you,

2 Pet. 3:16 As also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

E. Always accepting the balancing of others.

III. The results of coordination—cf. Acts 2:14-47:

Acts 2:14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and spoke forth to them: Men of Judea, and all who are dwelling in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.

Acts 2:15 For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is the third hour of the day;

Acts 2:16 But this is what is spoken through the prophet Joel:

Acts 2:17 "And it shall be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream things in dreams;

Acts 2:18 And indeed upon My slaves, both men and women, I will pour out of My Spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy.

Acts 2:19 And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

Acts 2:20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord comes.

Acts 2:21 And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Acts 2:22 Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man shown by God to you to be approved by works of power and wonders and signs, which God did through Him in your midst, even as you yourselves know—

Acts 2:23 This man, delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you, through the hand of lawless men, nailed to a cross and killed;

Acts 2:24 Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it.

Acts 2:25 For David says regarding Him, "I saw the Lord continually before me, because He is on my right hand, that I may not be shaken.

Acts 2:26 Therefore my heart was made glad and my tongue exulted; moreover, also my flesh will rest in hope,

Acts 2:27 Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor will you permit Your Holy One to see corruption.

Acts 2:28 You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence."

Acts 2:29 Men, brothers, I can say to you plainly concerning the patriarch David that he both deceased and was buried, and his tomb is among us until this day.

Acts 2:30 Therefore, being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him to seat One from the fruit of his loins upon his throne,

Acts 2:31 He, seeing this beforehand, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was He abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.

Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.

Acts 2:34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The

Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand

Acts 2:35 Until I set Your enemies as a footstool for Your feet."

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.

Acts 2:37 And when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, What should we do, brothers?

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:39 For to you is the promise and to your children, and to all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God calls to Himself.

Acts 2:40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this crooked generation.

Acts 2:41 Those then who received his word were baptized, and there were added on that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 2:43 And fear was upon every soul; and many wonders and signs took place through the apostles.

Acts 2:44 And all those who believed were together and had all things common;

Acts 2:45 And they sold their properties and possessions and divided them to all, as anyone had need.

Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart,

Acts 2:47 Praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.

A. Harmony.

B. Authority.

C. Life.

D. Fruit.

IV. The secret of coordination being to stay on the cross and to be without opinions:

A. Having no consideration and knowing only to work—2 Tim. 4:9, 13.

2 Tim. 4:9 Be diligent to come to me quickly.

2 Tim. 4:13 The cloak which I left in Troas with Carpus, bring when you come, and

the scrolls, especially the parchments.

B. No preference only obedience—1 Sam. 15:22.

1 Sam. 15:22 And Samuel said, Does Jehovah delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As much as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed, than the fat of rams.

C. No ambition or consideration but only the cross and resurrection—Phil. 3:9-10.

Phil. 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,

Phil. 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

REFERENCE

Normal Christian Church Life, Ch. 4; The Elders' Management of the Church, Ch. 8; The Glorious Vision and the Way of the Cross, Ch. 2.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE MEANING OF COORDINATION

What is coordination? It means that your portion is here, my portion is here, and his portion is also here; everyone's portion is here. Yet all are in coordination. However, this is not what we see in some places. What the condition of some seems to say is that unless a certain one puts out all his portions, he will not put out anything. It is either everything or nothing. To them, it is either one person's portion, or another person's portion. If it is not your portion, then it is my portion. Either I do it all, or I do not do anything at all. This is absolutely not coordination. The real coordination means that your portion is here, my portion is here, and everyone else's portion is here.

In some local churches I have indeed seen this kind of coordination where everyone is included. When an action is taken, everyone's portion goes into it. No one would say that if he does it, he does it all, and if he does not do it, he will not have anything to do with it. Rather, everyone speaks, and every

brother's portion is put into it. I may not be the one who is speaking today, but when one brother speaks, in his speaking there is my opinion and my feeling. Although I do not make the arrangements and I am not responsible for a certain district or a certain hall, yet within that overseeing there is my portion, because in some areas there is my view, my suggestions, and my fellowship. It does not mean that since a hall is not under my care, I will therefore not touch it at all. We cannot say that such-and-such a responsibility rests on one elder and that such-and-such a hall rests on another elder. We have to see that the responsibility of the whole church rests on the shoulders of all the elders. Here is the need for fellowship and coordination. (The Elders' Management of the Church, p. 149)

In scripture we see that there was always more than one elder or bishop in a local church. It is not God's will that one believer should be singled out from all the others to occupy a place of special prominence, while the others passively submit to his will. God as purposed that several brothers should unitedly bear responsibility in the church, so that even in controlling its affairs they have no depend one upon the other and submit one to the other. If the management of the entire church rests upon one man, how easy it is for him to become self-conceited, esteeming himself above measure and suppressing the others brethren (3 John). God has ordained that several elders together share the work of the church, so that no one individual should be able to run things according to his own pleasure, treating the church as his own special property and leaving the impress of his personality upon all its life and work. As they honor one another and trust one another to the leading of the Spirit, none taking the place of the Head, but each regarding the others as fellow members, the element of mutuality, which is the distinctive feature of the church, will be preserved. (Rethinking The Work—The Elders Appointed by the Apostles, pp. 49-50)

THE WAY OF COORDINATION

When the elders in the church see the need to be capable in everything, immediately they will realize the need of coordination. It is impossible for you alone to meet the many needs in the church. Perhaps you are skillful in planning, yet you may not be able to carry out your plans practically. Perhaps

you are good in working, but you are very weak in planning. You may be especially good in shepherding, but you may be very weak in handling business affairs. You may be very good in handling business affairs, but you may come short in the supply of life. Hence, you can see that no elder can meet all the needs. To meet all the needs, the elders must be coordinated. (The Elders' Management of the Church, pp. 116)

In order to be capable in everything, there is the need for coordination. In order to have the manifold gifts, there is also the need for coordination. Many times, I am distressed about the elders in certain localities, because among them you do not see any coordination. Three or five of them may be meeting, discussing and planning there, yet among them there is no coordination. (p. 149)

Without fellowship and coordination, no one elder should speak and act independently, for to do so would annul the fact that the elders are plural in number. The elders are not one, but many. Whenever the elders move and speak, they do so with one another. It is not just a matter of representing one another, but a matter of being with one of representing one another, but a matter of being with one another. Every report is something that represents the whole eldership, because it is something that the whole eldership has fellowshipped about and is doing in coordination. For this reason, the elders must be in coordination.

Learning to Accept Authority

Under normal circumstances, when eight or ten elders come together, they should not adopt a congressional system and should not look for a democratic solution. Rather, they should open to one another and fellowship in the Holy Spirit. Every elder should learn to fear the Lord and to live before the Lord. They should learn to present all their feelings concerning a certain matter. Those elders who are the authority should also learn to fear the Lord, to be without preconceptions, prejudice, or bias, and to listen to this fellowship and to touch the brothers' feelings. After they have sensed the intention of the Holy Spirit, those who are the authority can make the decision and can announce that the matter should be take care of in a certain way. If they do

this, the result will not be democracy or autocracy, but will be something that issues from the Holy Spirit.

At the beginning, he would allow the brothers to speak about their feelings. One brother may feel one thing, and another brother may feel another thing. Every brother would speak out what he feels. If I am the one who should act as the head, I should fear God. I should not have any preconception, prejudice, or bias, but should simply touch everyone's feeling. In the end, When I am clear within and am peaceful, I will say, "Brothers, if that is the case, let us make such-and-such a decision." Every time we discuss any matter, we should learn not to have any arguments, nor to ignore any inward feelings. If any of the brothers feel there is something wrong with the decision, he can still speak out his feeling. The leading one should still listen to this feeling in a serious way and should still consider it. This is the way for the elders to coordinate in the church. Among the elders there is no democracy or autocracy; everyone submits to the authority of the Holy Spirit. No one is too aggressive, or at all passive. Instead everyone places himself fully among the elders. Everyone knows in what order he is placed, and everyone accepts the authority without insisting on anything or resisting any responsibility. This is the way to coordinate together.

Willing to be Broken

I hope that the brothers would see that if we insist on anything in an unbroken spirit and atmosphere, even if what we insist o is right, we have to expect a considerable problem. I am not saying that we should not insist. But we have to learn to be broken, and even if we insist on something, we still have to be broken. Some brothers are not insisting, yet they are not broken at all. My opinion may not get through in a matter. Subsequently, I will not insist. But neither will I touch the matter or inquire about it any further; I will just let it go by. Please remember that this way of not insisting is the strongest protection and preservation of oneself. Hence, all the time we must learn to be a broken person among the brothers. Of course, this requires God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. We must be smitten by God before we can be a broken person.

To be Open

All those who do not open themselves to the brothers are keeping themselves whole. As such, it is impossible for them to coordinate. Many problems result from a lack of openness, the most serious of which is misunderstanding. If you never open up yourself or share your feeling with others, but you hold on to what you consider as right, misunderstanding and misinterpretation will very easily result. This misunderstanding is the enemy's most serious weapon to destroy coordination. I know of some places where elders cannot be coordinated together simply because of misunderstanding. Wherever misunderstanding occurs and exists, coordination is finished. Everyone may still be able to come together for talks and discussions, but it will be of no avail, because the germ of misunderstanding has killed the life of coordination.

Openness can solve many problems. Sometimes there are problems among the brothers. Do not avoid the problems; rather face them head on. Suppose you avoid the problem, and I avoid the problem; the more we avoid it, the closer we will become, and the closer we become, the more misunderstanding there will be. This is only the problem on the negative side. On the positive side, a person who is not open cannot supply others with grace and life, and cannot receive others' supply. This is because there is no flow between you and others; what is in you cannot flow out, and what is in others cannot flow into you. Hence, in order to coordinate together, everyone must be open.

Humble yet Not Passive

In order to coordinate together well, the elders need to be humble and not be passive. I may be a very humble person. Yet at the same time I am very positive. When a person is humble, it is easy for him to be passive. But when a person is positive, it is not easy for him to be humble. This is common human nature. But in the coordination, we have to learn to be humble without being passive. I have to touch everything, and I want to participate in everything. I have my view in everything, and I am happy to express my feeling in everything. Yet I remain humble. This humility with this positiveness is a difficult lesson to learn. It is not easy for those who are humble to be positive.

In order to be humble as well as positive, there is the need for grace and for brokenness.

Always Accepting the Balancing of Others

If you are one who visits others, you need to be balanced a little by administration. If you are one who administrates, you need to be balanced a little by the ministry of the Word. If you are one who ministers the Word, you should be balanced a little by administration. If you are one who cares for the spiritual direction among the brothers and sisters, you should be balanced a little by the gospel. If you are one who is very zealous for the preaching of the gospel, you have to be balanced a little by the administration of the church and the edification of the saints. In the coordination, we have to learn to be balanced all the time.

THE RESULTS OF COORDINATION

Harmony

With such a coordination, the church will surely be in harmony. Disharmony in the church is fully caused by the elders. If the elders are in harmony, it is impossible for the brothers and sisters not to be in harmony. The elders are the source of harmony in the church. I do not at all like to go to a church in disharmony is a punishment to the brothers and sisters. How sweet, peaceful, and happy a thing it is to have harmony in the church!

Authority

The authority of the elders rests upon their harmony. A brother once asked the elders, “You tell me to submit to authority. But if the elders are not in harmony, whose authority do you expect me to submit to? Which head should I submit to?” This is an honest statement. If the elders are not in harmony, there will be no authority.

Life

One thing is sure: where harmony is, there is authority, and where authority is, there is life. The living water of life flows out from the throne.

The bud shoots forth from the top of the rod. Resurrection life is derived from authority, and the authority of the elders comes from the harmony among them.

Fruit

If the elders are in harmony, and if they have the authority and the life, whatever they do will bear good results. If they preach the gospel, people will be saved. If they edify others, others will get the help. If they visit, people will be revived. The church will be very prolific, and there will be clusters of fruit. I can tell the brothers and sisters that a barren church is surely a sign of the disharmony of the elders. When the elders are in harmony, there will be authority and life; there will be the begetting and nurturing power, and there will be the abundant fruit. Hence, the brothers have to realize that our gains and losses are small matters. The big question is the harmony in the church. If the Lord does not have a way, if hundreds of thousands of souls are not saved, if many are not perfected and are not truly built together, the blame rests on the elders. Once the elders have a good coordination, immediately a harmonious spirit will be produced. This is authority, and this is life. Under such circumstances, whatever they do, there will be abundant fruit because God's presence is there. May the Lord be merciful to us, and grant us to learn this serious lesson, so that the Lord's blessing can be poured out among us. (The Elders' Management of the Church, pp. 122-132)

THE SECRET OF COORDINATION BEING TO STAY ON THE CROSS AND TO BE WITHOUT OPINION

What is the secret of coordinate? Coordination must be a matter of "no more I." There must no longer be you or I. Once there is you and I, there is no coordination. (I heard that among you) there was some news that was not as good. Team members have found out that it is not an easy thing to coordinate together. Everyone has opinions. You may argue that man cannot survive without opinion. Yet the strange thing is that the Bible requires us to have no opinion.

In Philippians 2:2 Paul says, “Make my joy full...think the same thing, having the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing.” In other words, to make Paul’s joy full, the Philippians must not have opinions. However, it is not easy to be without opinions.... I will tell you a secret. The best way is to stay on the cross. The best way for two people to work together without any argument, opinion, or long face, is to crucify both on the cross. Thank the Lord, He has already crucified us on the cross! (The Glorious Vision and the Way of Cross, p.20)

There may be two jobs in the Lord’s work that need to be taken care of. One of them is regarded as a great work and the other as small. Do you want to choose the one regarded highly or the one considered lowly? Every one of us should learn not to consider if a work is great or small. We should only take care of the work itself.... By the Lord Mercy, since I entered the Lord’s work...I have only known how to work. Spontaneously I was on the cross. It did not mean that there were no problems. It only means that spontaneously there were fewer problems.

May the Lord cover me with His blood. The Lord can be my witness. When I was in mainland China, I never tried to start any work anywhere. To me, everywhere was the same. I only received orders. Wherever there was the need, ... [or] wherever there was a place which was hard to work on, I was surely charged to go. I had no preference. ...you must learn to put the “I” aside in the Lord’s work. In other words, you have to be without “I.” You should only know to work, to minister, to pray, and to touch the Lord. You should not do anything else.

I hope that with this generation, others may see more of the cross and resurrection, both in our walk and work, as well as in our marriage life. Let me repeat that the way of the cross is the way of putting aside the “I.” Hence, in the work there is no ambition. Among us there is no degree, no position, and no name. There is nothing to gain and covet.

In the work, we should not consider whether or not others treat us well. We should not have such a consideration. I only know how to walk according to the Spirit. Toward everyone, I should be humble, kind, and loving. Toward the work, I only know to be busy and to labor. If others are taking the lead,

whatever the arrangements are, I carry them out. There is no feeling, preference, or consideration. This is the way of the cross.

The difficulty of the outward circumstances is not worth our mentioning. If there are sufferings, let there be sufferings. Do not have considerations. What does consideration mean? It means that there is ambition. It also means that I must stay on top; I must have it better. To consider is to highly regard the self. I must be number one, number two, number three, and even the last number. Everything is I. What is it to take the way of the cross? It means number one is not I. Number two and number three are not I. Even the last number is not I. Nothing is I. This is to die. If there is no you at all, everything will be well. There will be no problem in suffering. There will be no problems if other brothers and sisters mistreat you or misunderstand you. You will neither mind nor consider. This is to take the way of the cross. If you would learn this lesson well and continue on the way of the cross, your work will be effective and full of blessing. This is all I will say this morning. My point can be summarized in one phrase-no more I.... wherever you may be, let there be only Christ, and no more you. It is now no longer I that live, but Christ who lives. (pp. 25-26)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly the meaning of the coordination?
2. How shall we coordinate?
3. Describe briefly the results of coordination?
4. What are the secrets of coordination?

LESSON TWENTY-THREE

THE VIDEO TRAINING

Scripture Reading:

Titus 1:9 Holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who oppose.

1 Tim. 4:6 If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed.

Hymn: Taiwan Supplement 207

OUTLINE

I. The universality of the Lord's recovery depend on publications, audio tapes and video tapes.

A. In the past, when Brother Nee released messages, there was neither microphones nor any tape recordings. The messages were recorded in shorthand, which often was not perfect.

B. Today, we have both audio tapes and video tapes recording; all the messages can be conveniently preserved.

C. Through the publications, audio tapes and video tapes, the messages in the Lord's recovery have been spread to the six continents of the earth.

D. The raising up of the church in each place was mainly through the issuing of publications and the distribution of audio and video tapes not through the co-workers' going out to work.

II. The Lord having provided us with the marvelous environment for the release of His divine revelation.

A. The two semi-annual trainings allow the word of truth to be released in a regular basis.

B. Because these trainings are in the principle of a school. This help

not only in training the saints but also in having a proper, clear uplifted atmosphere for the release of the divine truths.

III. Any church which follows the ministry being strong and blessed.

IV. Video trainings giving people revelation of the truth and the training of character:

A. Every video training should have a clear record of registration.

B. In order to give the trainees a sense of responsibility and uplift the standard of the training, the training requires an offering.

C. The training requires the training of character.

D. The video training is the continuation of the live training; hence, the trainees should abide by all the practices of the live training in order to receive the most benefit.

REFERENCE

Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 2, Ch. 3; The World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move, Ch. 3; Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 4; Life-Study of 1 Timothy, Msg. 8.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

THE PROPAGATION OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY RELYING ON LITERATURE, RECORDING, AND VIDEOTAPING

After World War II, due to the worldwide economic prosperity, the ease of transportation, and the improvement in communication media, we have been enjoying a greater convenience than before the transmitting information. Formerly, it took half a day to make an overseas phone call, but now through the international long distance telephone, in a short time we can have a thorough discussion of affairs among a number of overseas churches. In the past, when Brother Nee released messages, there were no microphones, nor any tape recordings. The messages were recorded in shorthand, which often

was not perfect. Today, we have both audio-tape and video-tape recordings; all the messages can be conveniently preserved. In 1958, I began to visit the western world. Although for the most part I have worked in the United States, through the publications, audio tapes, and video tapes, the messages in the Lord's recovery have been spread to the six continents of the earth. Many seeking ones in different countries have received supplies of these publications, audio tapes, and video tapes.

The raising up of the church in each place was mainly through the issuing of publications and the distribution of audio and video tapes, not through the co-workers' going out to work. The video tapes, at present, are the most practical. In Mexico, we have eight or nine video stations. Through the release of the messages station by station, about twenty churches have been raised up. Although the Spanish-speaking saints also emphasize publications, unfortunately the Spanish translation work is still falling behind due to the limitation of time and manpower....Even in such a vast Christian country as the United States, people are suffering spiritual famine. The Lord's recovery has been able to spread overseas mainly because of the truth. Besides the churches in the Far East, the raising up of...other churches has been for the most part due to the issuing of publications, audio tapes, and video tapes in the Lord's recovery.

Today's the Lord's speaking is clearly in His recovery. The saved ones in every place and many who are hungry for the Lord desire the truth and the understanding of the Bible. Therefore, when our publications went into places such as North and South Africa, and Central and South America, those who pursue the truth were eager to receive them. The greatest need now is for the ministry station to quickly put out the publications, audio tapes, and video tapes. The audio and video tapes are being used extensively, and the results they produce are also very significant. (Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 2, Ch. 3, pp. 30-32)

THE LORD HAVING PROVIDED US WITH THE MARVEEEELOUS ENVIRONMENT FOR THE RELEASE OF HIS DIVINE REVELATION

The Lord has provided us with the marvelous environment for the release of the release of the divine revelation. When I began to minister the word in Los Angeles in 1962, we had only conferences and informal trainings. When we moved to Anaheim in 1974, I made the decision to have two ten-day trainings every year. Because these trainings are in principle of a school, those who come need to be properly enrolled. This helped not only in training the saints but also in having a proper, clear, uplifted atmosphere for the release of the divine truths.

For the expounding of the New Testament and the publishing of this exposition for the benefit of the churches and the Lord's children, I made the decision to have two trainings yearly with the help from the trainees and the work of the polishers and the serving ones in the ministry office so that the word of the Lord's truths may be released regularly. This practice helped a lot for the publishing of the interpreted, expounded, and understood Word for seventeen years without any interruption. I consider this as a marvelous environment for the release of His divine revelation.

I am full of thanks to the Lord for His supply to meet every need. I am also thankful to the Lord that we have been able to have two annual trainings for the last seventeen years without interruption. This has been the Lord's mercy. He has provided us with the marvelous environment for the release of His divine revelation. I am sorry that my senior co-worker, Brother Nee, did not have such an environment.

We have over forty faithful, full-time workers in our three offices in Anaheim, Irving, and Taipei. In addition to these workers, a number of other saints volunteer their time to help us spread the truths. We are serving the churches all over the earth with the publishing and the tape ministries, and we have been doing this for over seventeen years. I thank the Lord that we have such a marvelous environment for the release of His divine revelation. I am thankful to the Lord that much of what I have spoken has been put into print. Even if I die, my word in the Lord still speaks. He has provided us with the marvelous environment for the release of His divine revelation.

ANY CHURCH WHICH FOLLOWS THE MINISTRY

BEING STRONG AND BLESSED

Today we should follow Timothy's example and lay before the saints the things with which we have been nourished by the Lord through the ministry (1 Tim. 6:4). How wonderful the church life would be if we all did this! However, if we turn from the ministry and seek to produce something different, we may give place to differing teachings. It was not Timothy's intention to teach anything different from what Paul taught. Rather, he would lay before the brothers what he had received from Paul.

It is a fact of history in the Lord's recovery that any church which follows the ministry is strong and blessed. But those churches which neglect the ministry and try instead to do something on their own have become a failure.... My burden is to produce groceries [The Life-Study]. The churches and the saints are free either to use them or to disregard them. But if the saints cast away the nourishment found in these messages, I wonder what they will feed on. We are what we eat. If we eat the "groceries" produced in today's religion, we shall be part of religion. Let me say in frankness and honesty that the leading ones need to take "these things" and lay them before the saints that they may be nourished. (The Life-Study of 1 Timothy, pp. 70-71)

VIDEO TRAININGS GIVING PEOPLE REVELATION OF THE TRUTH AND THE TRAINING OF CHARACTER

According to the regulation of the Living Stream Ministry, every video training should have a clear record of registration.... Moreover, in order to give the trainees a sense of responsibility and uplift the standard of the training, the training requires an offering.... The account should be clear, orderly, exact, and accurate. (Vessels Useful to the Lord, Ch. 4.)

Base on my experience of serving the saints for many years, I know that all people are the same. They are willing to receive grace but are reluctant to bear any responsibility and lack the sense of responsibility. So I required the applicants to have a little offering. In the United States, regardless of what it is, if it is for free, people will regard it as worthless. In their concept, anything

that is free must be something that is not so good. Therefore, I required everyone to have some offering.

At the beginning, the regulation of the training was very strict. Those who were below sixteen or above sixty were not allowed to apply. Those who were sick or those whose spiritual condition was not good also were not allowed to come. Upon reporting your arrival, your entire living, twenty-four hours, was under the training. You were not allowed to visit friends or go shopping as you wished. Once you arrived at your hospitality, the schedule was already arranged. Things such as when to get up, when to have morning watch, and when to go to sleep were all stated. You must arrive five minutes before the meeting starts. Once the time came, the doors to the meeting hall would be closed. If you were absent for three times, you would be automatically withdrawn [from the training]. Those who enrolled in the training should prepare for the testing. [Those who had failed three times] would also be automatically withdrawn.

In this way, everyone was be put on the right track. There was be a distinct, separating line between the inside and outside of the training. No one was loose, but everyone was stirred up in his spirit. Moreover, because the saints had strictly abided by the training regulations, this caused me as one who released the word to be encouraged. This is the reason that the two semi-annual trainings have lasted this long for the continual spreading... of the truth. (Abstracts of Messages Concerning Various Aspects of Church Service, pp. 78-79 in Chinese)

If we are serious in doing things, we will surely produce an impact and a smooth work. The inborn habit of us Chinese, the atmosphere of our society, and the tradition in our blood are all contrary to these. Therefore, ...you first have to change your character from top to toe....Need to change your Chinese character thoroughly. (Vessels useful to the Lord, Ch. 4)

If you are going to conduct a video training, you will have to abide by the regulations set by the Living Stream Ministry; this is the proper way. The reason why we are strict is because we hope that those who [spend the time] before the Lord to be trained in His word can also be trained in their character, so that they would not be the same as they were. In the past, they

did not care whether they came to a meeting early or late. When they were in the meeting, they looked around and talked loosely with people. We hope that those who join the training will be trained in the matter of character, and we also want to teach them how to meet and how to study the Lord's word.

We hope that the "parents" in each locality can cooperate with us. The church is your family, and you have sent your "children" here to attend the training. The parents must cooperate with the ones conducting the training. In this way, the training will be successful.... We are really happy to see that there are some who want to receive benefit from the video training, and we are glad to serve you. But let me say it again, the parents of each locality must cooperate with the school so that we can accept your students. The Lord's Recovery has many different aspects—the zealous preaching of the gospel, the offering of the material riches, and the pursuing of the truth; this will provide the way for the Lord. (Abstracts of Messages concerning Different Categories of Service, p. 82 in Chinese)

QUESTIONS

1. Why do the churches in the Lord's recovery need the video training?

2. For the release of His divine revelation, what is the marvelous environment that the Lord has provided for His recovery?

3. How to improve the video training in order to produce the greatest impact?

4. Give your comments on the practice of the video training in your locality.

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR

THE PRACTICE OF BLENDING

Scripture Reading:

Col. 4:16 And when this letter is read among you, cause that it be read in the church of the Laodiceans also, and that you also read the one from Laodicea.

1 Cor. 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ?

1 Cor. 10:17 Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread.

Rev. 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Hymn: Taiwan Supplement 609

OUTLINE

I. The significance of blending:

A. Not an organization of any nature.

B. Not a system in any way.

C. Not a kind of unification in the outward practice.

D. But an organic building of the God-man who are perfected in life as the representatives of a local church, as Zion within Jerusalem and who live the reality of the Body of Christ.

II. The need of the blending for the building up of the Body of Christ:

A. To blend all the local churches together as one, as many as possible, in the processed Triune God, the pneumatic Christ and the consummated Spirit.

B. The Lord blending the seven churches in Asia by writing them one epistle compose of the seven epistles to each of them respectively—Rev. 1—3.

C. The apostle blending the churches in Colossae and Laodicea by writing the epistle to each of the two churches respectively and asking them to read the two epistles reciprocally—Col. 4:16.

II. The blending of the universal Body of Christ.

A. God has blended the body together—1 Cor. 12:24

1 Cor. 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked.

1. The blending of all the individual members of the Body of Christ.

2. The blending of the churches in certain districts.

3. The blending of all the co-workers.

4. The blending of all the elders.

B. Such a blending is not social but the blending of the very Christ whom the individual members, the district churches, the co-workers, and the elders, experience, and partake of.

C. For the building up of the universal Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2) as the final goal of God's economy according to His good pleasure—Eph. 1:23; 1:9-10; 3:8-10; Rev. 21:2.

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph. 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.

Eph. 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

Eph. 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

REFERENCE

The Practical Points Concerning Blending, Chs. 2-3; 1993 Blending Conference Messages Concerning the Lord's Recovery and Our Present Need, Ch. 2; The Divine and Mystical Realm, Ch. 6.

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINISTRY

SIGNIFICANCE OF BLENDING

What is the significance of our blending? It is not an organization of any nature. The first stanza of Hymns, #541 says, "Not the law of letters, / But the Christ of life." Then stanza 4 says, "Not religion, even / Christianity, / Can fulfill God's purpose / Or economy." Our blending has nothing to do with the dead letter, any religion, or anything of Christianity. The significance of...blending is the reality of the Body of Christ. This reality is nothing but the group of God's redeemed who have all been made God, the God-men, by God. They live a life not by themselves but by another life which is within them. This other life is the Triune God processed and consummated to enter into them and take them as His abode, His dwelling place.

Ephesians 3:17 tells us that Christ is now making His home in our hearts. In John 14:23 the Lord said, "if anyone loves Me...My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make an abode with him." This word make is not a small word. To make is to build. The only way to make a home is by building. This building is not by anything; physical but by the spiritual element and spiritual essence of the Divine Trinity. This building actually is a kind of organic constitution. The reality of the Body of Christ is a living by all the God-men united, joined, and constituted together with God by mingling humanity with divinity and divinity with humanity. (The Practical Points Concerning Blending, p. 26)

THE NEED OF THE BLENDING FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

The thought of blending is very strong in the Bible. In the Old Testament, there is a type of the blending for the fulfillment of God's economy. However, if we read the Old Testament only in letters, we will not be able to see it. This

type for the blending was strongly referred to by the apostle Paul. In 1 Corinthians 10:17 Paul said, “Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread.” Paul’s thought of the church being one bread was not his own invention; rather, it was taken from the Old Testament. The meal offering in Leviticus 2:4 consisted of cakes made of fine flour mingled, with the oil. That is blending. Paul tells us that the church is a bread, a cake, made of fine flour. This fine flour comes from wheat grains, and the wheat grains come from the one grain of wheat, which is Christ. John 12:24 says that Christ is the one grain of wheat who fell into the earth and died and grew up in resurrection to produce many grains, which are we, His believes. We are the many grains so that we may be ground into fine flour for making the cake, the bread, of the church. Here we can see the thought of blending in the Bible.

Hence, the neighboring local churches should be clustered as much as possible in the blending way for the spiritual benefits in the mutual building up of the Body of Christ, as the Lord Jesus clustered the seven neighboring churches in Asia.

There is only one Body in this universe. This one Body is the one church of God manifested in many localities as many local churches. Although the local churches are many in existence, they are still one universally in element, and they all express that one element. (1993 Blending Conference Messages Concerning the Lord’s Recovery and Our Present Need, p. 46)

In the book of Revelation the Lord Jesus clustered and blended the seven churches together as one. He wrote seven letters, one letter to each of the seven churches, and yet He put all the seven letters together as the one total Epistle and sent it to all seven churches that they might all receive the same fellowship (Rev. 1:4, II; 2:1;3:22). In the eyes of the Lord all the seven local churches were just one church because He has only one Body. Furthermore, the apostle Paul also blended the two churches in Laodicea and Colossae together. He wrote a letter to the church in Laodicea and asked the church in Laodicea to let Colossae read it. He also wrote a letter to the church in Colossae and asked Colossae to let Laodicea read it (Col. 4:16). (pp. 46-48)

In 1 Corinthians, in 12:24, Paul wrote, “But God has blended the body together giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked.” This verse says clearly that God has blended all the believers together. But where is the blending in the recovery? We may think that the coordination in the church is the reality of the blending. However, I must tell you that even the coordination in the churches not the reality of the Body of Christ. At this point you may wonder what the reality of the Body of Christ is. This is why there is the need to set up a “university” or a “college” so that we can go on from “high school” to reach the highest peak, the reality of the Body of Christ.

It is common today that in the local churches what we can see is mostly the “church” in its meetings, activities, works, and services. But we cannot see much of the reality of the Body of Christ in resurrection, that is in the Spirit, in the pneumatic Christ, and in the consummated God. So there is the need for us to endeavor to be absolutely in the resurrection life of Christ. We need to endeavor to reach in the church life the highest peak, today’s Zion, of the reality of the Body of Christ until we consummate in the New Jerusalem, including Zion. Dear saints, this is our need. To have the blending is to meet this need. (The Practical Points Concerning Blending, pp. 19-20)

THE BLENDING OF THE UNIVERSAL BODY OF CHRIST

God has blended the Body together (1 Cor. 12:24). The word blended also means adjusted, harmonized, tempered, and mingled. God has blended the Body, adjusted the Body, harmonized the Body, tempered the Body, and mingled the Body. The Greek word for blended implies the losing of distinctions. One brother’s distinction may be quickness, and another’s may be slowness. But in the Body life the slowness disappears and the quickness is taken away. All such different races and colors. Who can make the blacks and the whites lose their distinctions? Only God can do this. A husband and a wife can gave the harmony in their marriage life only by losing their distinctions.

In order to be harmonized, blended, adjusted, mingled, and tempered in the Body life, we have to go through the cross and be by the Spirit, dispensing Christ to others for the sake of the Body of Christ. The co-workers and elders must learn to be crossed out. Whatever we do should be by the Spirit to

dispense Christ. Also, what we do should not be for our interest and according to our taste but for the church. As long as we practice these points, we will have the blending.

When a co-worker does anything, he should fellowship with the other co-workers. An elder should fellowship with the other elders. Fellowship tempers us; fellowship adjusts us; fellowship harmonizes us; and fellowship mingles us. We should forget about whether we are slow or quick and just fellowship with others. We should not do anything without fellowshipping with the other saints who are coordinating with us. Fellowship requires us to stop when we are about to do something. In our coordination in the church life, in the Lord's work, we all have to learn not to do anything without fellowship.

Among us we should have the blending of all the individual members of the Body of Christ, the blending of all the churches in certain districts, the blending of all the co-workers, and the blending of all the elders. Blending means that we should always stop to fellowship with others. Then we will receive many benefits. If we isolate and seclude ourselves, we will lose much spiritual profit. Learn to fellowship. Learn to be blended. From now on, the churches should come together frequently to be blended. We may not be used to it but after we begin to practice blending a few times, we will acquire the taste for it. This is the most helpful thing in the keeping of the oneness of the universal Body of Christ. Today it is very convenient for us to blend with one another because of this modern age with its modern conveniences.

When we blend together, we have the cross and the Spirit. Without the cross and the Spirit, all that we have is the flesh with division. It is not easy to be crucified and to do all things by the Spirit in ourselves. This is why we must learn to be blended. Blending requires us to be crossed out. Blending requires us to be by the Spirit to dispense Christ and to do everything for the sake of His Body.

We may come together without much blending because everyone stays in themselves. They are afraid to offend others and make mistakes, so they keep quiet. This is the manner of man according to the flesh. When we come together, we should experience the terminating of the cross. Then we should

learn how to follow the Spirit, how to dispense Christ, and how to say and do something for the benefit of the Body. That will change the entire atmosphere of the meeting and will temper the atmosphere. Blending is not a matter of being quiet or talkative but a matter of being tempered. We can be in harmony, because we have been tempered. Eventually, the distinctions will all be gone. Blending means to lose the distinctions. We all have to pay some price to practice the blending.

Such a blending is not social but the blending of the very Christ whom the individual members, the district churches, the co-workers, and the elders enjoy, experience, and partake of.

The blending is for the building up of the universal Body of Christ (Eph. 1:23) to consummate the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2) as the final goal of God's economy according to His good pleasure (Eph. 3:8-10; 1:9-10). (The Divine and Mystical Realm, pp. 86-87)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe briefly the significance of the blending?

2. Describe briefly the need of blending for the building up of the Body of Christ.

3. How to practice blending?