TEN LINES IN THE BIBLE



LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

TEN LINES IN THE BIBLE

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ISBN: 978-0-7363-2644-5

CONTENTS

1. The Line of the Triune God
2. The Line of Christ
3. The Line of the Offices of Christ
4. The Line of Life
5. The Line of Building
6. The Line of the Kingdom
7. The Line of God's Covenants
8. The Line of Dispensations
9. The Line of Man
10. The Line of Satan

PREFACE

Brother Witness Lee conducted a three-month service training in Taipei, Taiwan, beginning on October 5, 1959, and concluding on January 22, 1960.

CHAPTER ONE

THE LINE OF THE TRIUNE GOD

The Bible is a book that reveals God Himself. All the words in the Bible are full of the revelation of God; therefore, we will first look at the line of the Triune God in the Bible. We will look at it in three sections—the names of God, the attributes of God, and the works of God.

THE NAMES OF GOD

Hebrew Names in the Old Testament

God

In the Bible the first name by which God is called is God. In the Old Testament there are at least three different Hebrew words for God—*Elohim*, *El*, and *Eloah*, each with a distinct meaning. When modifiers are added to these names, compound names are produced.

Elohim

Elohim is a word in the plural form; it is a plural word indicating a number higher than two. When we read Genesis 1:1, which says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," we often ask the question, "Since God is one, why is He called Elohim?" There are a few points that require explanation.

1. According to the form of the words in Genesis 1:1, *God* is plural, yet *created* is singular. This shows that although God is three, He is still one.
2. In Genesis 1:26 God who is Elohim refers to Himself as "Us," another plural term. Also in Genesis 3:22, when Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God said, "The man has become like one of Us." In Genesis 11:7, when the children of men were building the tower of Babel, God again said, "Let Us go down and there confound their language." Still again in Isaiah 6:8 God said, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?" Furthermore, in John 17:11

and 22 the Lord Jesus prayed that the disciples might be one "even as We are." God repeatedly refers to Himself as "Us" and "We."

3. While *We* is plural, *image* in Genesis 1:27 is singular, and *His* in *His own image* is singular as well. So here we must acknowledge that God is a God who is three yet one.
4. In Matthew 28:19 the Lord said, "Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The persons are three, yet *name* is singular. So it is very clear that God is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
5. In John 17:11 and 22 the Lord said that the Father and the Son are one, which is to say that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one.
6. Although God is three in person, 1 Timothy 2:5, 1 Corinthians 8:4 and 6, and Romans 3:30 all say that God is uniquely one. This proves that God is three yet one, or we may say, one yet three.
7. According to the record in Numbers 6:24-26, God told the priests to bless the children of Israel with three requests. The first request would be carried out by God the Father, the second request by God the Son, and the third request by God the Spirit. In Isaiah 6:3, when praising God, the seraphim also say consecutively, "Holy, holy, holy."
8. In the New Testament in Matthew 6:9-10 there are also three requests in the Lord's prayer. The first request is carried out by God the Father, the second request by God the Son, and the third request by God the Spirit. Furthermore, in Revelation 4:8, when praising God, the four living creatures also say consecutively, "Holy, holy, holy."

Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, prayer on the earth always consists of three requests, and praise in the heavens always consists of three *holy*'s. Thus, by inference, we can conclude that God is truly triune.

In Hebrew *Elohim* is related to two words. The first word *El* means "one who is strong and powerful," and the second word *alah* means "to bind oneself with an oath." Oath-making reveals God's faithfulness; being strong and powerful reveals God's might. God is a faithful mighty One.

The name Elohim is used more than two thousand five hundred times in the Old Testament. It is first used in Genesis 1:1, showing that the God who created the heavens and the earth is triune and that He is mighty and faithful. The emphasis on might relates to creation, whereas the emphasis on faithfulness relates to preservation and maintenance. Through His might the

Triune God created the heavens and the earth, and through His faithfulness He preserves and maintains the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1 shows us that the heavens and the earth were created jointly by the three-one God.

El

El is a word in singular form, meaning "the first mighty One, the preeminent mighty One." This word is used approximately two hundred and fifty times in the Old Testament; it is first used in Genesis 14:18-20 and 22, revealing that God is the preeminent, high, and mighty One in the universe.

Eloah

Eloah is the singular form of *Elohim*, derived from the word *alah*. *Alah* means "to [fear, revere, hence] worship"; therefore, *Eloah* denotes that God is the mighty One to be worshipped. This word is used approximately fifty-six times in the Old Testament; it is first used in Deuteronomy 32:15 and 18. From *El* three more compound names are derived.

El Elyon

El means "the preeminent mighty One," and *Elyon* means "the Most High." *El Elyon* denotes that God is the mighty One who is the highest in the universe. This name is first used in Genesis 14:18-20 and 22.

El Shaddai

Shaddai means "breast" or "udder"; *El Shaddai* denotes that God is the mighty One with an udder, the all-sufficient mighty One. Our relationship with God is like that of an infant lying on the bosom of the mother and receiving the supply for all the necessities in life; hence, God is the All-sufficient One to us. This title is first used in Genesis 17:1. It is also used in Genesis 28:3; 35:11; and 49:25.

El Olam

Olam has the meaning "hidden, concealed," and "from generation to generation and from eternity to eternity," similar to the Greek word *aeon*. The full meaning indicates that God is the mysterious mighty One in eternity. Some English versions translate this title as "the everlasting God," while

others translate it as “the eternal God,” yet neither of these expresses the meaning adequately. This word is first used in Genesis 21:33; in addition, Psalm 90:2 and Isaiah 40:28 use this word.

In addition to the above six Hebrew names for God, there is a Chaldean (Aramaic) word used as a title for God, *Elah,* which is also written in certain places as *Elahah* for emphasis. This word is equivalent to the Hebrew word *Eloah.* It is used approximately eighty times in Ezra and Daniel.

Jehovah

The name of God that occurs most frequently in the Old Testament is Jehovah or Yehovah. In Hebrew this name is composed of portions of three words: *Je* represents a portion of a word, *ho* represents a portion of a word, and *vah* also represents a portion of a word. *Je* indicates “will be,” *ho* indicates “is,” and *vah* indicates “was.” Therefore, *Jehovah* translated into English is “the One who is, was, and always will be.” The verb *to be* can also be translated as “to be present”; thus, in Revelation 1:8 the Chinese Union Version says, “He who is present, who was present, and who will be present forever.” So *Jehovah* means that God is present, was present, and will be present forever and also that He is, was, and will be forever. In addition, this word also means “self-existing and ever-existing, without beginning or end, forever remaining and never ceasing to be,” and “forever unchanging.” In Exodus 3:14-15 “I AM WHO I AM” is the meaning of *Jehovah.*

In the New Testament the Lord Jesus referred to Himself often as I Am. This can be seen in John 8:24, 28, and 58. I Am in the New Testament is Jehovah in the Old Testament. This name means that God is everything. It is mentioned more than seven thousand times in the Old Testament and is first used in Genesis 2:4. From the basic title *Jehovah* ten compound names and an abbreviated name are formed.

Jehovah-ʿosenu

This title means “Jehovah our Maker”; it is used in Psalm 95:6.

Jehovah-jireh

This title means “Jehovah will provide”; it is used in Genesis 22:14.

Jehovah-ropheka

This title means “Jehovah who heals you”; it is used in Exodus 15:26.

Jehovah-nissi

This name means “Jehovah is my banner.” Jehovah is our banner for going to war; He fights for us. This name is used in Exodus 17:15.

Jehovah-meqaddishkem

This name means “Jehovah who sanctifies you”; it is used in Exodus 31:13 and Leviticus 20:8.

Jehovah-shalom

This title means “Jehovah is peace”; it is used in Judges 6:24.

Jehovah-roʾi

This title means “Jehovah is my Shepherd”; it is used in Psalm 23:1.

Jehovah-tsidqenu

This name means “Jehovah our righteousness;” it is used in Jeremiah 23:6.

Jehovah-shammah

This name means “Jehovah Is There”; it is used in Ezekiel 48:35.

Jehovah-tsebaot,
or Jehovah-sabaoth

This title means “Jehovah of hosts”; it is used in 1 Samuel 1:3 and Jeremiah 2:19.

These ten compound names reveal Jehovah as something to us; therefore, we know that Jehovah is a particular name related to God’s coming to have a relationship with man. In Genesis 1 there is only the name Elohim. The name Jehovah is mentioned starting from chapter 2, when speaking of the relationship between God and man. This name shows us that God is

everything that man needs, just as the Lord referred to Himself as I Am in the New Testament.

Jah

This word is an abbreviated form of *Jehovah;* it is first used in Exodus 15:2. In the book of Psalms it is combined with *hallelu* to form the frequently used word *Hallelujah,* meaning "praise Jehovah." This name is also used in Isaiah. It is used forty-nine times in these three books.

Lord

God is often addressed also as Lord in the Old Testament. This is not only a title used by a slave to address his master; it is also a title used by a wife to address her husband (1 Pet. 3:6). There are two words for *Lord* in Hebrew.

Adon

This word in singular form is used approximately twenty times to refer to God. It is first used in Exodus 23:17.

Adonai

This word in plural form is used four hundred and thirty-nine times. It is first used in Genesis 15:2 and 8. On the one hand, we are His slaves, and He is our Master; on the other hand, we are His wife, and He is our Husband. When *Lord* is used in the Bible, both meanings are included.

Throughout the Old Testament the name Jehovah is used almost seven thousand times; the name Elohim is used more than two thousand five hundred times. Together the two names are used almost ten thousand times.

Man or Son of Man

In the Old Testament there are many instances where God appears to man in the form of a man; for this reason God as Christ is also referred to as a man and as the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13; Psa. 80:17). The first reference to God as man is in Genesis 18:1-2, 16-17, and 22. One of the three men who appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre was God as Christ. In Genesis 32:24-30 the man who wrestled with Jacob at the ford of the Jabbok was also God

embodied in Christ. In Judges 13:6, 8, 11, and 15-22 the man who appeared to Manoah and his wife was also God in Christ. God appeared as a man even before the New Testament.

The Spirit of God

In the Old Testament the Spirit of God is a person, and He is referred to as both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jehovah. The title *the Spirit of God* is found in Genesis 1:2; 6:3; Exodus 31:3; 35:31; Numbers 24:2; Job 26:13; 33:4; Isaiah 4:4; and Joel 2:28-29. The title *the Spirit of Jehovah* is found in Numbers 11:25; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 2 Samuel 23:2; Psalm 139:7; Isaiah 11:2; 44:3; 48:16; 61:1; 63:10-11, 14; and Ezekiel 11:5; 36:27; 37:14.

Greek Names in the New Testament

Theos

Theos means "God"; it is equivalent to *El, Eloah,* and *Elohim* in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, God usually refers to the Triune God; in the New Testament, God sometimes refers to God the Father (1 Pet. 1:3), sometimes to God the Son (Heb. 1:8), and sometimes to God the Spirit (Acts 5:3-4). In the New Testament *theos* is used when referring to either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we can see that each One of the three is God. God is a triune God.

Pater

Pater translated into English is "Father." By the name Father in the New Testament, God reveals Himself to us in a particular way. God as the Father denotes God as the source of all things, the origin of all things, the initiation of all things, and the beginning of all things. The name Father implies the source, the beginning. In John 20:17, after His resurrection, the Lord said to the disciples, "I ascend to My Father and your Father." First John 3:1 says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God." The word for *Father* in these two verses is *pater*.

In the New Testament an Aramaic (Chaldean) word, *abba,* is used in reference to the Father. Its transliteration using the English alphabet also is *abba*. It so happens that in Chinese *abba* is also a term for *father*.

There are instances in the New Testament where the Greek word *pater* and the Aramaic word *abba* are used together. In English the term is translated "Abba, Father." This can be found in Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6, and Mark 14:36; it is a more emphatic title.

Despotes

In English *despotes* is translated "Sovereign Master," or simply "Master." However, this is very different from the Old Testament *adonai,* which is translated "Lord." Here the word *despotes* refers to a master with authority. It is used in Luke 2:29, Acts 4:24, and Revelation 6:10 in reference to God. The New Testament also uses this title when referring to the Lord Jesus. Second Peter 2:1 and Jude 4 both refer to the Lord Jesus as the Master of the universe who has authority over everything.

Kurios

The word *Lord* in Matthew 1:20 and Mark 12:29 is *kurios,* referring to the Lord Jesus; the word is equivalent to *adon* and *adonai* in the Old Testament. When the New Testament quotes an Old Testament verse, *kurios* is often used in place of *Jehovah.* Mark 1:3 is an example. *Kurios* is a title of the Lord Jesus in His divinity. On the one hand, the Lord Jesus is man, and on the other, He is God. When speaking of His being God, He is *kurios,* Lord. In John 20:28 when Thomas said, "My Lord and my God," it is "My *kurios* and my *theos."* Furthermore, *Lord* in "Jesus is Lord" in 1 Corinthians 12:3 and *Lord* in "Lord Jesus" in 1 Corinthians 5:4 are *kurios.* This is a title of the Lord Jesus in His divinity.

Jesus

The Greek word *Jesus* and the Hebrew word *Joshua* are the same word. *Je* is *Jehovah.* So the meaning of *Joshua,* or *Jesus,* is "Jehovah Savior," or "the salvation of Jehovah." Jesus is Jehovah coming to be our Savior, Jehovah coming to be our salvation. *Jesus* in particular refers to the Lord being a man. This is a title of the Lord Jesus in His humanity. For this we can refer to Luke 1:31 and Matthew 1:21. Although Jesus is a name that refers to Him as a man, this man is Jehovah coming to be our Savior and becoming our salvation.

Christos

In English *christos* is *Christ*. *Christos* is Greek; in Hebrew the word is *Messiah*. *Messiah* and *Christ* both mean "the anointed." For this we can refer to John 1:41. *Messiah* is used at least once in the Old Testament, in Daniel 9:25-26.

In the Old Testament times, in order for someone to become a priest, a king, or a prophet, he had to be anointed with oil; all the priests, kings, and prophets were anointed ones. In the New Testament, as Luke 4:18 says, God anointed the Lord Jesus when He came to the earth, so the Lord Jesus was also an anointed One. *Christ* is a title of the Lord Jesus in His office (Matt. 1:16; Luke 2:11; Acts 2:36).

Hagion Pneuma

Hagion means "holy" and *pneuma* means "spirit"; the combination of these two words is *Holy Spirit*. In the New Testament *hagion pneuma* refers to the Spirit as a person. Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 are examples of this title.

The Son of Man

The New Testament refers to the Lord Jesus also as the Son of Man (Matt. 20:28; Mark 2:28; Luke 19:10; John 1:51; Acts 7:56).

The Man

The New Testament refers to the Lord Jesus also as "the man." 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "There is...one Mediator...the man Christ Jesus."

The Father, the Son, and the Spirit as the Triune God

First Peter 1:2 and Ephesians 1:17 speak of the Father as God; Hebrews 1:8 and John 1:1 speak of the Son as God; Acts 5:3-4 and 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 speak of the Spirit also as God. Matthew 28:19 speaks of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit together. God in the New Testament is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—the Triune God.

There are some passages in the Bible that mention the Father, the Son, and the Spirit together. 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.” First Corinthians 12:4-6 says, “...but the same Spirit...yet the same Lord...but the same God.” First Peter 1:2 says, “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.”

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The names of God tell us who God is; the attributes of God show us God’s nature and character. The Bible not only contains numerous names of God, showing who God is, it also contains countless words describing what kind of God He is to us. If we are willing to spend the time, we could find a hundred points on the attributes of God. However, due to the limitation of time and energy, the thirty points we have found should be sufficient for now.

Among these attributes there are five basic attributes; if we can remember these five, the rest can easily be remembered. We may say that these five attributes are primary and the rest are derivative. The primary attributes of God are the sources, whereas the other attributes are derived from these five sources.

These attributes will be listed below. As we mention each attribute, we can give only a few references; we do not have the time to explain their meaning.

1. Loving—related to His heart—1 John 4:8, 16; John 3:16; Isa. 49:15; Psa. 136.
2. Righteous—related to His works—Deut. 32:4; Psa. 7:9; Isa. 45:21; Zeph. 3:5; 1 John 1:9.
3. Faithful—related to His words—Psa. 89:33-34; Heb. 10:23; Deut. 7:9.
4. Holy—related to His nature—Lev. 11:44-45; 20:26; Josh. 24:19.
5. Glorious—related to His self—Exo. 24:16; Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; Psa. 106:20; Jer. 2:11; Rom. 1:23; Heb. 1:3.

The above five points are the sources of the following attributes of God:

6. Life—Psa. 36:9.
7. Light—1 John 1:5; Psa. 36:9; Isa. 2:5.
8. Good—Psa. 25:8; 86:5.
9. Truthful—33:4; 91:4; 57:10.

10. Pure—Job 4:17; Psa. 18:26.
11. Joyful—1 Chron. 16:27; Rom. 14:17; 1 Thes. 1:6.
12. Compassionate or merciful—Psa. 78:38; 111:4; Deut. 4:31; Exo. 34:6.
13. Gracious—22:27; Psa. 86:15.
14. Jealous—Exo. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; Josh. 24:19.
15. Wise—Job 12:13; 9:4; 36:5.
16. Knowledgeable—1 Sam. 2:3; Job 36:4; 37:16.
17. Mighty—Gen. 49:24; Isa. 9:6; 10:21.
18. Great—Deut. 10:17; Psa. 96:4; 104:1.
19. Awesome—Deut. 7:21; Psa. 47:2; Dan. 9:4; Neh. 9:32.
20. Most High—Psa. 57:2; Dan. 4:2; 5:18, 21.
21. Transcendent—Psa. 135:5; 95:3; Deut. 33:26.
22. Perfect—32:4; 2 Sam. 22:26; Matt. 5:48.
23. Beautiful—Psa. 27:4; 90:17.
24. Majestic—104:1; 145:5.
25. Splendorous—96:6; 145:5; 104:1.
26. Eternal—Deut. 33:27; Psa. 92:8.
27. Long-suffering—Exo. 34:6; Psa. 86:15.
28. Indignant—Exo. 4:14; Num. 22:22; Lam. 2:1-3.
29. Repentant—Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam. 15:11; 2 Sam. 24:16; Joel 2:13.
30. Grieving—Gen. 6:6; Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30.
31. Unrepentant—Num. 23:19.
32. Prayer-hearing—Psa. 65:2; 66:19-20.
33. Saving—Zeph. 3:17; Psa. 74:12.
34. Judging—Gen. 18:25; Rev. 19:11.
35. Recompensing—Jer. 51:56; Deut. 32:35.
36. Avenging and retributing—Psa. 94:1; Deut. 32:35.
37. Hidden—Isa. 45:15.

After reading the above attributes, we have some idea of the kind of God He is. We can see that God is sometimes very joyful and sometimes provoked to anger; yet He is long-suffering. He also grieves. He never repents of His words, even though He sometimes repents of His actions. He carries out salvation, judgment, recompense, vengeance, and retribution without the slightest imprudence. However, He is also a God who hides Himself; He often hides Himself. When He is hidden, arrogant men will certainly take the opportunity to speak arrogant words, and godly men will undergo severe trials. It may

even seem that there is not a God in the universe. However, in times of necessity He will come forth to execute judgment and to vindicate Himself.

We should not forget that all of God's attributes originate from these five basic primary attributes—love, righteousness, faithfulness, holiness, and glory. When speaking of His heart, He is loving; when speaking of His works, He is righteous; when speaking of His word, He is faithful; when speaking of His nature, He is holy; and when speaking of Himself, He is glorious. Countless attributes of God originate from these five points. For example, truthfulness surely originates from faithfulness and goodness from righteousness. I hope that the saints would commit these attributes to memory and consider them; this will certainly help us to know God.

THE WORKS OF GOD

Of all the matters concerning God in the Bible, the most important portions concern the works of God. The names of God tell us who God is, the attributes of God tell us what kind of God He is, and the works of God reveal God's operation and move in the universe. Therefore, the works of God are the most central revelation concerning God in the Bible. Now we will discuss them in two groups.

God's Operation

The first group consists of five main points:

Planning

In Ephesians 1:9 and 11 and in 3:11 *plan* or *purpose* is translated into "will" in Chinese. Actually, the meaning of the original Greek word does not refer merely to a will; it refers more to a plan, a purpose, according to a will. For example, we may have the will to build a large meeting hall, but we may not have the plan; if we had a plan, the will would surely be included in the plan.

The plan of God is something in eternity. Ephesians 1:11 tells us that we were predestinated according to God's purpose, God's plan, and verse 4 says this predestination took place before the foundation of the world.

Economy

The Greek word for *economy* has the meaning of "arrangement, management, and dispensing." According to the Greek, *arrangement* in Ephesians 1:10 and 3:9 is better rendered "economy," since the meaning of *economy* is stronger than that of *arrangement*.

For example, if we were to set up chairs in the meeting hall, we can call it an arrangement because it is a trivial task. However, if we want to run a big business or open a large factory, we cannot call this an arrangement; instead we should call it an economy. God's plan is a great matter; therefore, in God's plan there is an economy, and this economy includes management, administration, arrangement, and dispensing.

Selection

The goal of God's eternal plan is to build a dwelling place for Himself and to build the Body of Christ for His Son. In other words, it is to choose a bride for His Son and to gain a corporate vessel for Himself as His full expression. To accomplish this goal, He chose man, whom He had created, before the foundation of the world. God's selection is not merely to save us, but to accomplish His eternal plan (1:4; 1 Pet. 1:2).

Predestination

Predestination is to mark us out. In eternity, while carrying out His economy according to His plan, God chose us according to His foreknowledge and sealed and designated us (Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:29).

Creating

Original Creation

The record in Genesis 1:1, which says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," refers to God's original creation. At this point man had not been created; only the angels had been created. Among the angels there was a leader, God's anointed cherub, whom God set over the original universe. At one point this anointed archangel, due to his pride, rebelled against God and became Satan, God's adversary. The original universe under his rule became corrupted and was brought under God's judgment with water covering the surface of the deep.

Further Restoration

The matter of restoration is spoken of from Genesis 1:2 to the end of Genesis 2. The original creation was submerged under water; it was waste and emptiness, with darkness on the surface of the deep. Therefore, God came in to restore. First, He ordered the heavenly luminaries to give light, and then He ordered the water on the earth to gather together so that dry land would appear. This restoration rearranged and restored the heavens and the earth that had been judged. The sphere of His restoration is the universe, all things are the means, and human beings are the center. God's creation is for the expression of God Himself.

Redeeming

Rebellion occurred not only in God's original creation, which came under God's judgment; it took place also in God's restoration. Man, the center of this restoration, was deceived by Satan; he followed Satan and rebelled against God. Consequently, the restored universe once more became fallen and corrupted. At this point He had to find a way to save man or abandon His original plan. Thankfully, God is a God who does not change. Regardless of the damage done by Satan, God will accomplish what He planned; He would never give up halfway. Therefore, God came to redeem man.

Seeking Out Fallen Man

Immediately after Adam sinned and fell, God came to seek him out (3:8-9).

Promising the Redeemer and the Way of Salvation

God came and sought out the fallen Adam and promised him a Savior, who would be the seed of the woman; He also promised him a way of salvation, which involved killing an animal sacrifice and putting on its skin (vv. 15, 21).

Revealing the Way of Salvation

God did not merely promise a way of salvation, He also revealed it through many types. The way of salvation is nothing other than the redeemed ones being identified with the Redeemer.

In order for Noah and his family to be saved through the ark, they had to enter into the ark. For us to be saved through Christ, we must enter into Christ. Therefore, whenever the matter of believing in Jesus is spoken of in the New Testament, the Greek word for *to believe* is always followed by the preposition *into*. To believe into the Lord Jesus means to be identified with the Lord Jesus; without identification there is no substitution. Noah's family of eight was hidden within the ark; the floodwater assailed the ark instead of them. God saw the ark instead of them. The ark became their substitute by virtue of their being identified with the ark. In the same way, a sacrifice could be slaughtered in place of Adam because Adam was identified with the sacrifice. Furthermore, when the Israelites observed the passover, they hid within houses that were sprinkled with blood and consumed the meat of the lamb. These are all stories of identification. Rahab the harlot and her family were saved because they gathered in a house with a scarlet thread tied to it. Later, the Israelites entered Canaan and established six cities of refuge. Those who unintentionally committed sin could flee to a city of refuge to avoid punishment. Here God clearly reveals the way of salvation—there must be identification in order for there to be substitution. The Lord Jesus can replace us because we have been identified with Him. Therefore, 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." We must be in Him to become the righteousness of God.

Calling and Promising Man Salvation

In Genesis 12:1-3; 26:3-4; and 28:13-14 God called Abraham and promised that he and his descendants would receive the salvation that God gave for man. For this we need to refer to the covenant God made with Abraham.

Establishing Types of the Savior and of the Way of Salvation

After God called and promised man salvation, He was still concerned that man might not know the Savior or the way of salvation. So He established numerous types, like a kindergarten education, conveying thoughts through pictures and describing them in numerous ways.

Revealing the Way of Salvation

through the Types of Redemption
and Deliverance of the Israelites

God redeemed the Israelites with the Passover lamb in the land of Egypt, and with His mighty hand He delivered them out of Egypt through the Red Sea. In this type God revealed that His way of salvation causes the redeemed to receive His life through a substitutionary shedding of blood and delivers the redeemed from the bondage of Satan and the world with great power through the death of Christ.

Giving the Law to Manifest and Prove
Man's Condition So That Man
Could Draw Near to the Way of Salvation

God gave the law at Mount Sinai so that through the law man's corruption and impotence would be manifested and proven. In this way man would be subdued, knowing that he could not do good, and thereby, would draw near to the way of salvation.

Revealing the Way of Salvation
through the Types
of the Tabernacle and the Priests

This is another group of the types of the way of salvation, explaining the means by which the redeemed ones fellowship with God in their daily living.

Revealing the Way of Salvation through the Types
of Leading the Israelites through the Wilderness,
Entering Canaan, Receiving the Inheritance,
and Establishing the Kingdom

This is the third group of types of the way of salvation, explaining the process and the ultimate goal of salvation. Together, the three groups reveal the way of salvation in full.

Promising the Redeemer and Redemption

through Prophecies

In the Pentateuch and the books of history, God speaks of the Savior and the way of salvation through types. In the books of prophecy and the Psalms God promises the Redeemer and the redemption through prophecies in plain words.

Becoming Flesh, Being Crucified, and Being Resurrected to Accomplish Redemption

All the above six points are matters in the Old Testament. However, God eventually became flesh to be man's Savior according to what He had promised, typified, and prophesied. He accomplished redemption through crucifixion and resurrection. This is the record of the Gospels.

Ascending and Descending to Carry Out Redemption and to Build Up the Church in the Spirit

The Lord died and resurrected, accomplished redemption, ascended to the height, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and then descended as the Spirit to carry out His accomplished redemption in man for the building up of the church. This is seen in the book of Acts and in the Epistles.

Judging

The creation fell, so God came in to redeem; yet some of the creation would not receive redemption. Therefore, He came in and did some clearing up. This clearing up is judgment, and His judgment is directed toward three parties.

Judging the Unredeemable Elements in the Churches

The churches should be fully redeemed; yet there are some unredeemable elements that have been brought into the churches. For example, the flesh, the will of man, the world, sin, the things of the devil, and corrupted things are being judged by God. The seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3 tell us that all the churches throughout the generations have had some unredeemable elements. Therefore, at the very beginning of Revelation the redeeming Lord comes as the judging Lord to judge all His redeemed churches. When He is

manifested, His eyes are like a flame of fire, a sharp two-edged sword proceeds out of His mouth, and His feet are like shining bronze; this is a scene of judgment.

Judging the Unredeemed People in the World

Revelation is a book on judgment. The first three chapters are on the judgment of the church, and chapters 4 through 20 are on the judgment of the world. Every unredeemed person, thing, or matter in the world will suffer God's judgment in the last day, which is signified by the judgment of Babylon, the great city.

Judging Satan, Death, and Hades

Last, God will judge His adversary, Satan, and the tools used by Satan, which are death and Hades. Everything that has gone through God's judgment will ultimately be thrown into the lake of fire; all that remains will be the redeemed, who will gather in the New Jerusalem in the end.

Completing

God's plan is completed in Revelation 21 and 22.

The New Heaven and the New Earth

A new universe, a new sphere, will appear. Then God will declare, "They have come to pass" (21:6), and "Behold, I make all things new" (v. 5). What should be put away will be put away, and what should be gained will be gained.

The New Jerusalem

The new heaven and the new earth will be the new sphere, and the New Jerusalem will be the new center. This New Jerusalem is the glorious expression of God in His Son through those who have been redeemed throughout the ages. In eternity without end, as Romans 9 says, the lake of fire will be the vessel making known God's wrath, and the New Jerusalem will be the vessel making known God's glory (vv. 22-23). At this point the works of God will be complete.

God's Move

The second group of the works of God also consists of five main points.

God Having Been Proven—
Creating the World

Romans 1:19-20, Psalm 19:1-3, Acts 14:15-17, and 17:26-27 all show us that God has proven Himself through the heavens and the earth, which He created.

God Having Spoken—
Revealing the Holy Scriptures

Hebrews 1:1-2, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21, and Matthew 22:31 all refer to a speaking God. God has proven Himself by creating the heavens and the earth, and God has spoken concerning Himself in the Holy Scriptures.

God Having Come—
Becoming Flesh

First Timothy 3:16 and John 1:14 say that God has come, becoming flesh and tabernacling among us. Not only has He been proven and has spoken, He has come.

God Having Entered—
Descending in the Spirit

After God passed through death and resurrection, He ascended and descended in the Spirit and is able to enter into man (14:16-19).

God Having Been Expressed—
Dwelling in the Holy City

Revelation 21 and 22 say that in the end God will dwell in the holy city, New Jerusalem, taking the holy city as His dwelling place for His expression.

If we look at these two groups of the works of God, we will see what God is doing in the universe. When we read through the names of God, the attributes

of God, and the works of God, the Bible will become clear and transparent to us.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LINE OF CHRIST

We will now look at the second line, the line of Christ. In the Bible there is no person, thing, or matter that is more important than Christ. Christ is the highest and greatest center in the Bible. Now we will see how the line of Christ runs through the entire Bible.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In God's Creation

Christ Being the Word of God

In the creation of all things, God did not use any materials; He used only His word. Hebrews 11:3 says that the universe was framed by the word of God. Psalm 33:9 also says, "He spoke, and it was; / He commanded, and it stood." This speaking is the word of God, and the word of God is Christ Himself (John 1:1). Therefore, all things came into being through Christ. The first thing that Christ as the Word of God enabled was the creation of all things in the universe. The creation and the existence of all things depend upon Christ being the Word of God.

Christ Being Light

There was light on the first day of creation, and there was a greater light on the fourth day of creation. In the New Testament this light typifies and symbolizes Christ (John 1:4; 8:12). In God's creation, first there is the word, and then there is light; only then can life come forth. Just as it is in the old creation, so it is in the new creation. When God regenerated us, the Lord Jesus came first as the Word of God, then as the light of life, and as a result, we received life inwardly.

Christ Being the Image of God

We all know that among all things there is only one kind of life that is like God—the life of man. God created man in His own image and likeness. In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our

likeness." *Our* refers to the Triune God. Then verse 27 says, "God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." *His* is singular; it undoubtedly refers to the second of the Trinity—the Lord Jesus. Colossians 1:15 clearly says that the Lord Jesus is the image of the invisible God. For God to create man according to His image means that He created man according to Christ. Therefore, in God's creation, Christ is not only the Word and the light, He is also the image of God. God created man according to Christ so that Christ would be manifested in the entire universe, that is, so that the image of Christ would be seen everywhere.

Christ Being the Head of All Creation

In typology Adam is the head of all of God's creation. God set Adam as the head over all things to typify the Lord Jesus as the Head over all things. However, as the head, it was not good for Adam to be alone; he needed a counterpart. At this point the church in type is mentioned.

Christ Being the Universal Bridegroom in All Creation

According to the account of creation in Genesis 1, when God created everything, including man, He set man as the head over all things; however, this head over all things needed a counterpart. Adam waited until a counterpart was produced from within himself. This counterpart was not created by God apart from him; Adam's counterpart was a part of him, taken from within him. Adam's rib became his wife, Eve. This shows that in the universe Christ is not just the Word, the light, the image of God, and Head over all things; He is also a universal Bridegroom to gain a glorious counterpart, who is the church. The church is a part of Christ, having been taken from within Him.

In the Redemption Promised by God

After God's creation was completed, Satan came in to damage, causing man to fall and become lost. Thus, God promised that Christ would come to redeem man.

Christ Being the Seed of the Woman

Christ is spoken of in Genesis 3:15 as the One who would destroy the serpent (Satan). He is the seed of the woman, the One who would destroy man's enemy, Satan.

Christ as the Lamb of God

Becoming Our Righteousness

Adam sinned and, being conscious of his own shame, he sewed leaves together to make a loincloth to cover his body. However, God made a coat of skin to clothe him (v. 21). We believe that the skin must have been taken from a lamb. Before the skin was made into a coat, the lamb must have been slaughtered, thus shedding its blood. This shows us that in God's promise of redemption to man, the Lord Jesus came not only as the seed of the woman to deal with the enemy, Satan, who damaged man, but also as the Lamb of God to become our righteousness so that we could put Him on and become acceptable to God in Him. In the redemption promised by God, on the one hand, Christ is the seed of the woman to deal with the enemy who damaged us, and on the other hand, He is the Lamb of God to be our righteousness.

In the Fellowship between Man and God

In the fellowship between man and God, Christ, as the gift man offers to God, becomes the food that God enjoys. This is typified by Abel's offering of the fat portions of the firstlings of the flock (4:4). The firstlings of the flock and the fat portions typify the Lord Jesus as the means by which we fellowship with God. In order for fallen, sinful men to fellowship with God, we cannot be in ourselves; we must be in Christ. We cannot rely on ourselves; we must rely on Christ. A gift relates to our being accepted by God, whereas food relates to God's satisfaction. Abel's offering signifies that the Lord Jesus is the means by which we fellowship with God. He is our gift to God for our acceptance before Him, and He is the food that God receives from us for His satisfaction.

In God's Saving Way for Man

Christ Being Our Ark

When God judged the people in the world and flooded the world with water, He delivered some from perdition. We also will be delivered in Christ, our ark.

Christ Being the Burnt Offering of Our Acceptance before God

As soon as Noah came out of the ark, he offered up burnt offerings. When God smelled the satisfying fragrance, He immediately accepted Noah. This shows us that Christ is not only our ark for deliverance from God's wrath, but on the positive side He is also our burnt offering for our acceptance before God.

In the Covenant of Grace Promised by God

The receiving of the covenant of grace promised by God can be seen in the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the covenant of grace promised by God, the Lord Jesus has a particular position.

Christ Being the Seed Who Receives the Inheritance

Galatians 3:16 tells us that Christ, as the true Isaac, is the unique seed of Abraham. In the book of Genesis almost everything concerning Isaac can be applied to Christ because Isaac typifies Christ. Christ is the unique One who receives the inheritance; all that the Father has is for Him and belongs to Him. His only lack is a counterpart. He needs a Rebekah to be His counterpart. This means that in the covenant of grace which God made with man, the Lord Jesus (including those who belong to Him) is God's unique Heir, God's unique seed, who received the inheritance. This seed received everything from the Father; everything the Father has belongs to Him. However, He needs a counterpart; He needs the church to be His Rebekah.

Christ Being the Cakes and the Calf Enjoyed in the Fellowship between God and Man

In the covenant of grace, God came to Abraham's tent one day to fellowship with him. On this occasion Abraham was not seeking God, but God was seeking Abraham. He did not go into God's presence to visit with Him, but God came to Abraham's tent to visit him. In the fellowship Abraham set cakes and a calf before Him. Undoubtedly, the calf signifies the Lord Jesus, and the cakes also signify the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was killed as a calf, and all that He is and all that He accomplished became a cake that man could offer to God. Later, in Exodus and Numbers God charged His people to present offerings involving animal sacrifices and meal offerings. In Genesis the calf signifies the offering of an animal sacrifice, and the cakes signify the meal offering. Both the offering of an animal sacrifice and the meal offering refer to the Lord Jesus as the enjoyment in the fellowship between man and God. God wants to carry out His covenant of grace to the point that we can fellowship with Him, and He can fellowship with us. In all of God's fellowship with us and our fellowship with God, everything that is being enjoyed is the Lord Jesus.

Christ Being the Lamb God Prepared for Man

In Genesis 22, when Abraham offered up Isaac, God showed Abraham a ram that had not been brought by him but had been prepared by God. Christ, as the real Lamb, solves all our problems before God, deals with all our difficulties before God, and satisfies all of God's requirements for us. Without this Lamb the covenant of grace that God made with us would be without a center and could not be fulfilled.

Christ Being the Peace Bringer

Genesis 49:10 tells us that as the peace bringer, Christ is called Shiloh, and to Him will be the obedience of the peoples.

In summarizing these four points, in God's covenant of grace, Christ is first the unique Heir, and everything that the Father has belongs to Him; His only need is a counterpart. Second, He is the enjoyment in the fellowship between God and man. Third, He is the Lamb who fulfilled God's covenant of grace. Finally, He is Shiloh in the covenant of grace, the peace bringer, and all the people will be obedient to Him. Therefore, without the Lord Jesus, God's covenant of grace with man would be without an Heir, there would be no

enjoyment in the fellowship between God and man, the covenant of grace would not be fulfilled, and the peace of the covenant of grace could not be spread to all the people. All things are fulfilled by Him, belong to Him, and spread to all the people through Him.

In God's Salvation to Man

Christ Being the Mighty Deliverer

Christ is the mighty Deliverer as typified by Moses. When God's people fell into Egypt, they needed a salvation, and for this salvation they needed a mighty deliverer. Without a mighty deliverer, God's people could not be delivered. Moses was truly a mighty deliverer. Even though Pharaoh had exceedingly great power, he could not prevail against Moses. This typifies Christ as the mighty Deliverer in God's salvation, releasing God's people from the authority of the devil.

Christ Being the Passover Lamb

The Lord Jesus became the Passover lamb to deliver us from God's judgment so that God's judgment might pass over us.

Christ Being the Lamb, the Unleavened Bread, and the Bitter Herbs Enjoyed by God's People

The Lord Jesus is not merely the Passover lamb for us outwardly so that we could be spared from the judgment of God; He also enters into us to be our supply.

Christ's Death Being the Separation between God's People and the World

Christ's death is the separation between God's people and the world as typified by the Red Sea. The Red Sea typifies the death of the Lord Jesus. Just as the blood of the lamb typifies the death of the Lord Jesus, the Red Sea also typifies the death of the Lord Jesus. In the shedding of the blood of the lamb, God's wrath passed over His people. By crossing the Red Sea, God's people came out of Egypt and severed their relationship with the world. The Red Sea typifies an aspect of the Lord Jesus' death on the cross.

In Exodus God's people were fully delivered. They had a mighty delivering one, the blood of the lamb was applied upon them, the flesh of the lamb, the unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs were taken into them, and the Red Sea separated them from the world. They were delivered from the judgment of God, the usurpation of the world, and the bondage of Satan, and they also had an inward supply of life. At this point they were saved.

In the Journey of God's People

After being saved, the people of God went on a journey. The Lord Jesus has an absolute position in this journey.

Christ Turning Bitter Water Sweet

After God's people were saved, they journeyed forward, yet no part of their journey was without hardship; everything was a trial. However, the Lord Jesus who died on a wooden cross, on a tree, is able to turn our bitter water and bitter situations sweet, like at Marah.

Christ Being the Daily Manna in Our Journey

The daily supply in our journey is the Lord Jesus; He is our daily manna.

Christ Being the Spiritual Rock That Follows God's People

The Lord Jesus is also our spiritual Rock in our journey, constantly flowing out as living water to supply us and quench our thirst.

Christ Being the One Who Prays for God's People and the One Who Fights for Them

In our journey of following God, the Lord Jesus is the Intercessor and the Fighter for God's people. In Exodus 17, as Moses was praying on the hill, Joshua was fighting in the plains. In this way they defeated Amalek, the enemy of God's people. This tells us that as we follow God in our journey forward, the Lord Jesus is our Intercessor on the one hand, and on the other

hand, He is our Fighter, who overcomes the enemies for us, especially overcoming our flesh.

Christ Being the Healing of God's People

In our journey of following God, we, God's people, sin against God so frequently that we often bring ourselves into a death situation; therefore, we need a healing of deliverance. In Numbers 21 the children of Israel committed a sin worthy of death, but God caused them to receive healing and spared them from death through the bronze serpent lifted up on a pole. The bronze serpent on the pole is a type of the Lord Jesus hanging on the cross.

Putting the above five points together, we see that as we follow God on our journey after being saved, all our needs are taken care of by the Lord Jesus. As we go through trials and bitter sufferings, He causes us to sense His sweetness. In our need for daily supply, He is our manna. In our need for living water, He is our spiritual Rock. As we encounter enemies, He prays and fights for us. When we sin against God, committing a sin worthy of death, He becomes our healing. All these provisions enable us to go on in our wilderness journey.

In the Service of God's People

On the one hand, we, God's people, are on a journey; on the other hand, we are serving God. Everything in this service is also Christ Himself.

The service of the children of Israel before God mainly involved the tabernacle, the offerings, and a group of priests (the tabernacle includes the furniture, such as the bronze altar and the bronze laver in the outer court, the golden lampstand, the table of the bread of the Presence, and the incense altar in the Holy Place, and the Ark of the Testimony in the Holy of Holies—all these items are included with the tabernacle). All three categories—the tabernacle, the offerings, and the priests—refer to the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is our tabernacle; He is the place where we can appear before God and where God can meet with us. John 1:14 clearly says that in the Lord's incarnation He tabernacled among us. Therefore, the Lord Jesus is the tabernacle for both us and God; in Him we meet God, and in Him God meets us. As for the furniture in the tabernacle, the bronze altar signifies His cross, the laver signifies the Holy Spirit who flows from Him, the table of the bread of the Presence signifies Him as our bread of life, the golden lampstand

signifies Him as our light of life, the golden incense altar signifies Him as our acceptance before God in resurrection, and the Ark of the Testimony signifies Him as our testimony and everything. All these items are Christ Himself.

All the offerings refer to the Lord Jesus, including the five main offerings—the burnt offering, the meal offering, the trespass offering, the sin offering, and the peace offering—and various other offerings. On the one hand, these offerings are the gifts we offer to God; on the other hand, they are the food accepted by God. All of them refer to Christ.

Furthermore, the priests, including Aaron and his sons, typify the Lord Jesus as well.

In our service as God's people, our tabernacle is Christ, our Priest is Christ, and our offerings are also Christ; everything in our service is Christ. When we read Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy, the tabernacle, the priests, and the offerings should all be understood as referring to Christ.

In the Fighting of God's People

Not only do we as God's people have to follow God in our journey and serve God, we also have to fight because there are enemies throughout the journey. Even when we have reached the God-promised good land, there are enemies occupying the land. In our fighting, Christ also has a particular position, which is typified by Joshua. When the Israelites entered Canaan to receive their inheritance, Joshua led them in their fighting. *Joshua* is a Hebrew word, which, when translated into Greek, becomes *Jesus*. Therefore, *Joshua* in the Old Testament is *Jesus* in the New Testament. Joshua typifies Christ leading us to fight, destroying all our enemies so that we may gain our rightful position and receive our rightful inheritance.

In the Inheritance of God's People

Christ Causing God's People to Receive the Inheritance

Not only did Joshua fight for God's people, he also caused God's people to receive the inheritance. He fought for God's people in order that they would receive the inheritance. He was able to allot the inheritance to them because

he fought for God's people and was victorious. In the same way, the Lord Jesus enables us to possess the inheritance that God has given to us.

Christ also Causing the Lost Inheritance of God's People to Be Redeemed

When we lose our God-given inheritance due to desolation, Christ redeems it for us. This is typified by Boaz. As Joshua, Christ causes God's people to receive the inheritance; as Boaz, Christ causes the lost inheritance of God's people to be redeemed. He is the One who allots the inheritance and the One who redeems the inheritance. The allotment of the inheritance is typified by Joshua; the redemption of the inheritance is typified by Boaz. This is the position of the Lord Jesus in the inheritance of God's people. So far we have covered the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth.

In the Kingdom of God

God's people were delivered from Egypt, journeyed through the wilderness, won the victory, entered Canaan, and received the inheritance. At this point God gained a kingdom among them. The Lord Jesus also has a particular position in the kingdom of God.

Christ Being the King

All the kings in this kingdom typify Christ. The Lord is the King, the Leader, in this kingdom.

Christ Being the Temple

The center of this kingdom was not the throne of the king but the temple of God. The temple typifies Christ Himself.

Christ Being the Priests

The priests who served God in the temple typify Christ.

Christ Being the Offerings

All the offerings that were offered in the temple typify Christ. In this kingdom the King is Christ, the temple is Christ, the Priest is Christ, and the

offerings are Christ. These points cover 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

In the Sentiments of the Experiences of the Saints

The preceding section speaks of the kingdom of God. Now we need to point out that in this kingdom there were many godly, spiritual men who lived in the presence of God. In God's presence they had experiences, and from these experiences came the expressions of their sentiments. This is the story of the five books of poetry—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. These five books concern the sentiments of the saints in their experiences. When they expressed their sentiments, unknown to them the Holy Spirit uttered Christ through them.

When we read the sentiments of the saints, we can see how Christ was the glorious One who humbled Himself and went through all kinds of sufferings and was killed by men; even the scene of His death is clearly portrayed and expressed in their sentiments, including how He was forsaken by God, how He was sneered at by men, how men divided His garments and pierced His hands and feet, how His bones were out of joint, and how His heart melted like wax on the cross. Furthermore, we can see how He was resurrected, how He was begotten of God and manifested as the Son of God in resurrection, how He was exalted and made both Lord and Christ by God, how He received authority to rule over all things, how He is coming again in majesty, and how He will rule and reign in the coming age. If we carefully read Psalms, together with Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, we will see that the process the Lord Jesus went through—from glory to humiliation, from humiliation back to glory, and from glory to reappearance—is clearly and accurately depicted in the expressions of the sentiments of the saints.

An outstanding feature in this portrayal is the use of the married life of the saints to portray the relationship between Christ and the church, especially in the process of His going from glory to humiliation and from humiliation to glory to gain a counterpart to match Him and to be joined to Him as one entity to become the great mystery in the universe. Christ occupies a full position in the books of poetry.

In the Prophecies of the Prophets

The books from Isaiah through Malachi also contain many prophecies concerning Christ. Micah 5 reveals that Christ's coming forth is from eternity; Christ is the One from ancient times, from the days of eternity (v. 2). Isaiah 7:14 tells us that Christ would become flesh by being born of a virgin. Micah 5:2 tells us that He would be born in Bethlehem. Isaiah 9:6 says that the One born in Bethlehem of a virgin is a Son and also the eternal Father; He is a child and also the mighty God. His name is called Wonderful Counselor and Prince of Peace. Isaiah 53 tells us that He is a man of humble origin, as a root out of dry ground, who had no attracting form nor majesty that men should look upon Him, nor beautiful appearance that men should desire Him (v. 2). He was despised and forsaken of men; He was persecuted by men and passed through all kinds of sorrows and trials (v. 3); in the end He was crucified by men and judged by God on the cross; God made Him a sin offering as our Substitute (vv. 4-6). Then He was resurrected, and His days were extended. Hosea 6:2 reveals the day of resurrection, showing us that it would be the third day. Zechariah describes how He was pierced on the cross by His people to become the fountain that washes away sins (12:10; 13:1).

If we carefully read through all the books of prophecy in the Old Testament and put all the prophecies concerning Christ together, we will see that these prophecies begin with His being in eternity past and continue with His humbling Himself as a man, passing through sufferings, dying and being raised, entering into glory, gaining the church, and coming back to the earth as the Sun of righteousness to manifest His majesty and glory. The prophecies in the prophetic books are too numerous to be adequately explained in a short time. We can only go over them briefly.

This is one of the lines in the Old Testament. From the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Malachi, the entire Old Testament is linked together by the Lord Jesus.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Christ in the Flesh

The four Gospels, which constitute the first section of the New Testament, show us the Lord Jesus in the flesh.

Christ in the Spirit

To be in the Holy Spirit is to be in resurrection. Christ in the flesh involves Christ's incarnation as a man. Christ in the Spirit involves Christ's death and resurrection. This is the scene at the end of the four Gospels and the beginning of the book of Acts. He was first in the flesh and later in the Spirit.

Christ in the Believers and the Church

Christ is in both the believers and the church, as seen in the Epistles. The Epistles show us the matter of Christ being in the individual believers. They also show us the matter of Christ being in the church. If we want to know Him, we must know of His being in the flesh, of His being in the Spirit, of His being in the individual believers, and of His being in the church.

Christ in God's Governmental Judgment

In the universe God's government involves mainly His judgment; the book of Revelation shows us God's judgment. God judges the church, the Jews, and the Gentiles; He judges the living and the dead. All these judgments are in the hand of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the One established by God as the Lord, and He is appointed by God as the One who judges the living and the dead (1 Pet. 4:5). God not only wants Him to be the Savior Lord and the Lord of all, God also wants Him to be the Lord of judgment.

Revelation is a book on judgment. In the first three chapters we see a sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus, and His eyes are like a flame of fire for judging the churches. Later, we see the Lord Jesus coming to judge the world; both the Jews and the Gentiles will be under His judgment. One day He will judge both the living and the dead, as they stand before His great white throne. In the end He will judge Satan and death. These judgments are God's government. The Lord Jesus has a particular position in God's governmental judgment.

In order to know our Lord, we need to see that He was so meek, lowly, approachable, considerate, capable of performing miracles, and able to speak words of wisdom in His flesh in the Gospels. We also need to know that He died on the cross for us and in resurrection became the Spirit, surpassing all limitations of space and time, having form yet being without form, that is, as

being without a form yet still having a form. He is seemingly intangible yet very tangible, that is, being seemingly tangible yet still being intangible. We also need to know that He came to be life in the individual believers, dwelling in them, and that He is the content and reality of the church. We also need to know that in God's government He rules over all and executes judgment on the church, the Jews, the Gentiles, the living, the dead, Satan, death, and Hades.

In the Kingdom

Judgment is Christ's clearing up of all the negative things and also His recovering. Whatever He judges, He clears up; whatever He judges, He recovers. After clearing up and recovering, His kingdom comes. At this time the entire universe will have only one authority instead of two. The authority of God Himself will be carried out freely in the universe and come to the earth, causing the whole earth to become the kingdom of God. This will be the coming of the millennial kingdom. In this kingdom our Lord Jesus will be the Leader and the King; moreover, He will be everything in the kingdom.

Christ in Eternity

When the millennial kingdom is complete, eternity will come. In eternity, in the new heaven and the new earth, Christ will be the Lamb on the throne, and God will be in Him. Christ will be the lamp, and God will be the light within Him. Out from His throne the living water of life will flow, in which will grow the tree of life. Christ will be the central character in the New Jerusalem, and the living city of the New Jerusalem will be His expression. He will gain the highest glory among all peoples and nations. He will be the One glorified and expressed in the center, at the height, and on the throne.

In summary, there are six *in*s in the New Testament: (1) in the flesh, (2) in the Spirit, (3) in the believers and the church, (4) in God's governmental judgment, (5) in God's kingdom, and (6) in eternity, in the new heaven and the new earth. There are thirteen *in*s in the Old Testament: (1) in God's creation, (2) in the redemption promised by God, (3) in the fellowship between man and God, (4) in God's saving way for man, (5) in the covenant of grace promised by God, (6) in God's salvation to man, (7) in the journey of God's people, (8) in the service of God's people, (9) in the fighting of God's people, (10) in the inheritance of God's people, (11) in the kingdom of God,

(12) in the sentiments of the experiences of the saints, and (13) in the prophecies of the prophets. Together there are nineteen *in*s in the Old Testament and the New Testament. If we read through all nineteen *in*s, we will have a thorough understanding of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Christ is the line that runs from Genesis through to the end of Revelation. We see Him in eternity past, in God's creation, in God's redemption, and even in eternity future. He is truly a glorious One!

CHAPTER THREE

THE LINE OF THE OFFICES OF CHRIST

The previous line, the line of Christ, is related to how Christ has become everything to God and to us. This line, however, concerns the offices of Christ. The official service of the Lord Jesus is a great matter in the Bible.

The offices spoken of in the Bible can be divided into three categories: first, the office of the priests; second, the office of the prophets; and third, the office of the kings. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament all the offices of man before God are included in these three categories. From Genesis to Revelation those who are anointed and used by God always serve within the sphere of these three categories. Some are priests, some are kings, and some are prophets.

Each of these three offices has particular functions. On the one hand, the service of the priests is to bring man to God, and on the other hand, it is to bring God to man. Bringing man to God is the more important aspect of this twofold ministry. The priesthood brings man into fellowship with God to touch His presence and to worship Him. When this aspect is fulfilled, the aspect of bringing God to man is fulfilled spontaneously.

Kingship emphasizes reigning for God, bringing God's authority to man so that man may submit to God's authority. The priesthood is a matter of worship and fellowship; the kingship is a matter of authority and submission. Without priests, man cannot approach God, fellowship with God, or worship God. In the same way, without kings, man cannot submit to the authority of God and be ruled by God.

The main function of the prophets is to make God's desire known to men. Prophets come from God to men to make known God's desire. The service of the priests is mainly to bring man to God, and the service of the prophets is mainly to bring God to man. Priests cause man to touch God's presence, and prophets cause man to touch God's desire.

In these three offices the priesthood is a matter of God's presence, the kingship is a matter of God's rule, and the prophethood is a matter of God's

desire. Without priests, man cannot be brought before God to touch God; without kings, man cannot submit to God's authority; and without prophets, man cannot know God's desire. These three offices include everyone who has ever been used by God.

In both the Old Testament and New Testament these three offices typify the work carried out by the Lord Jesus between God and man. The entire Bible points to the threefold office of the Lord Jesus through many who held these offices. From Genesis to Samuel is the age of the priesthood, with the first priest being Melchizedek. From Melchizedek to Aaron and his sons, priests were the spiritual leaders who had authority among the children of Israel. Later, Samuel brought in David and initiated the age of the kingship. This period continued until the beginning of the prophethood, when the Israelites were carried away to Babylon. During this period of time the leaders among God's people were not priests but kings. For example, when David and Solomon were reigning on the throne, they were the leaders, and the priests were in subordination to them. When the kingship failed, prophets rose up from among God's people. Although governmental authority was still in the hands of the kings at this time, the prophets were the spiritual leaders, and the kings were instructed, taught, and governed by the prophets. Therefore, the first part of the Old Testament is the story of the priesthood, the second part is the story of the kingship, and the third part is the story of the prophethood. These three groups of people typify the offices of Christ.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Priesthood—from Genesis to the First Half of 1 Samuel

All the priests in the Old Testament typify the priesthood of Christ. There are two representative figures—Melchizedek and Aaron. Melchizedek typifies the Lord Jesus being a Priest in His divinity, that is, the Son of God with the nature of God. According to the type, Hebrews 7:3 speaks of Melchizedek as being "without father, without mother, without genealogy; having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but likened to the Son of God, abides a priest perpetually." This shows that the order of Christ's priesthood is eternal, being neither established nor chosen by men but by God.

Aaron typifies the Lord Jesus being a Priest in His humanity. He is a Priest taken from among men, knowing the things of man, knowing their weaknesses and their sufferings; therefore, He is able to sympathize with those whom He represents and to exercise compassion toward those whom He bears. This is what Hebrews 5 through 7 show.

The Lord Jesus is a Priest with two natures, having humanity to know the things of man and having the divinity of the eternal God. His priesthood includes both the aspect of humanity and the aspect of divinity.

Kingship—from the Second Half of 1 Samuel to Song of Songs

All the kings in the Old Testament typify the kingship of Christ. In this respect there are also two representative characters—David and Solomon. David typifies the Lord Jesus as a man, experiencing the sufferings of human life and dying in the end. Solomon typifies the Lord Jesus in resurrection, ascension, glorification, and reigning.

Some say that David typifies the Lord Jesus in His first coming, while Solomon typifies the Lord Jesus in His second coming. This is not very accurate. When the Lord Jesus came to the earth the first time, He said that He was more than Solomon (Matt. 12:42). Therefore, the Lord Jesus is Solomon not just in His second coming. He is the greater Solomon even during His first coming.

As King, the Lord Jesus is both David and Solomon. On the one hand, He greatly seeks God, cares for God's desire, and suffers for God's will; He is David. On the other hand, He has great wisdom and glory; He is Solomon. David and Solomon show how the Lord Jesus came and suffered for man, cared for God's heart, and died on the cross, and how He resurrected from the dead, ascended, was glorified, and now reigns for God.

Prophethood— from Isaiah to Malachi

There are also two representative figures in the books of prophecy, typifying the prophethood of the Lord Jesus. Some people like to speak of Elijah and Elisha, saying that they typify the Lord Jesus. However, the Bible clearly says

that Elijah typifies John the Baptist. Elisha somewhat typifies the Lord Jesus because he was preceded by Elijah, just as the Lord Jesus was preceded by John the Baptist. However, according to the Scriptures, Elisha is not ranked with the prophets who wrote the books of the Bible. There are two representative figures from among the prophets who wrote books, Jonah and Isaiah. First, the Lord Jesus said, "Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" (Matt. 12:40). Moreover, He referred to Himself as One who is "more than Jonah" (v. 41). Second, Hebrews 2:13 quotes the Lord's word, saying, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given to Me," yet this word was spoken by Isaiah. Therefore, Isaiah also typifies the Lord Jesus coming to be a Prophet.

Jonah was a prophet to the Gentiles, and Isaiah was a prophet to the Jews. As a prophet, Jonah spoke of God's judgment, and as a prophet, Isaiah spoke of God's salvation. The combination of the two corresponds precisely to the gospel that comes out of God's desire. On the one hand, the gospel is for judgment; on the other hand, the gospel is for salvation. Judgment requires man's repentance, whereas, salvation requires man's believing. The gospel is for man to escape God's judgment by repenting and to receive God's salvation by believing. According to God's desire, the gospel is to be preached to the whole inhabited earth, not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles, so that all men would repent to God and receive His Son as their salvation instead of His righteous judgment. This is represented by the ministry of the two prophets Jonah and Isaiah.

The principle is the same with the Lord Jesus as the Prophet of God. He showed man the judgment of God and also showed man the salvation of God. He told man to repent so that he might escape God's judgment, and He also told man to believe so that he might receive God's salvation. The prophecies that the Lord Jesus spoke of as a Prophet concerning God's will involved repenting, believing, escaping God's judgment, and receiving God's eternal salvation. According to the sequence of the books in the Bible, Isaiah is before Jonah; but according to chronology, Jonah is before Isaiah.

Two priests, Melchizedek and Aaron, typify the priesthood of Christ. Two kings, David and Solomon, typify the kingship of Christ. Two prophets, Jonah and Isaiah, typify the prophethood of Christ. If we want to understand the threefold office of the Lord Jesus, as portrayed by these six representative

characters, we need to read the entire Old Testament. Only when we have read through the entire Old Testament will we understand all that is portrayed by these six representative characters.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Prophethood

It is obvious that when the Lord Jesus was incarnated, dwelt among men, and lived as a man on the earth, He was a Prophet preaching the gospel of God. He told people, "The kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). He also said, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!...It will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you" (Matt. 11:21-24). This is Jonah's tone. He was a great Jonah preaching repentance for the deliverance from judgment. Furthermore, He was truly an Isaiah; His name was called Jesus, which means "Jehovah coming to be our Savior." This is very close to the meaning of the name Isaiah, which means "Jehovah is our salvation." The first name denotes Savior, and the second name denotes salvation.

When the Lord was on the earth, He preached God's judgment in a complete way and spoke God's salvation in a full way. He brought people to repentance like Jonah, and He caused people to believe like Isaiah.

The Lord Jesus preached the words of Jonah on the earth on the negative side and the words of Isaiah on the positive side. On the negative side, He told men to repent and escape God's judgment; thus, He was a great Jonah. On the positive side, He preached God's salvation; thus, He was an Isaiah.

Priesthood

From the birth of the Lord Jesus to His death on the cross He ministered as a Prophet. When He went to the cross to die, He began His priestly ministry. As the Priest of God, He brought the sacrifice that God delights in the most to the cross and offered it to God. The book of Hebrews tells us that after He passed through death and resurrection and ascended to God, He sat down on the right hand of God as our High Priest in order to continually intercede for us (8:1). As a Prophet, He brings God's desire to man; as a Priest, He brings man's needs to God.

Kingship

From the second coming of the Lord Jesus to eternity He will be the King. When the earth becomes the kingdom of our Lord Christ (Rev. 11:15), He will bring God's authority to man. Not only will He reign with the overcomers for a thousand years in the coming kingdom age, He will also be the King for eternity in the new heaven and new earth.

The above three points show that the offices of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament are also the priesthood, the kingship, and the prophethood. However, He first serves as a Prophet, then a Priest, and then a King. Before God's intention is fully accomplished, He will hold the office of the prophet. His prophethood will come to an end when eternity future begins after the kingdom age. Then there will be only two offices, the priesthood and the kingship. In eternity future He will be the Priest before God and the King among men. He will bring God's authority to man and bring man's needs to God forever. These are the offices of the Lord Jesus as seen in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LINE OF LIFE

When we open the Bible and read at the very beginning in the book of Genesis, we see a very striking item—the tree of life. When we read through to the end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation we once again see the tree of life. In the beginning of the Bible the tree of life is present, in the middle there are stories of life, and at the end the tree of life is still present. From this we should realize that the biblical revelation regards life as its center and its line. Now we will briefly touch the key points on the line of life in the Bible.

LIFE BEING THE CENTER OF GOD'S CREATION

The more we read the record of God's creation in Genesis 1 and 2, the more we should realize that the center of God's creation is life. Although it seems like many things should be mentioned concerning God's creation, the account in Genesis 1 and 2 is very simple; it simply speaks of the aspects of God's creation that pertain to life. All the criticism by scientists about the book of Genesis is really misplaced because the account in Genesis is not a complete record of God's creation but merely a record of the portion concerning life.

Now let us speak briefly about Genesis 1 and 2. Genesis 1:2 describes the earth, prior to God's further creation, as being "waste and emptiness, and darkness was on the surface of the deep." These words fully convey a scene of death. Waste is related to death; darkness is related to death; even the deep water is related to death. In other words, initially everything there was related to death. In this situation, God began His work of re-creation.

The Spirit Coming

The Spirit of God brooded upon the surface of the waters. According to the principle in the Bible, whenever the Spirit comes, it is for created beings to receive life.

Light Coming

Whenever the Bible speaks of light shining, it is for man to receive God's life into him.

Light Being Separated from Darkness

In order to have life, light must be separated from darkness.

That Which Is Above Being Separated from That Which Is Under

In order to have life, the things which are above must also be separated from the things which are under.

Dry Land Being Separated from the Waters

The dry land was separated from the waters in order that the dry land could bring forth life.

Life Coming Forth

At this point all kinds of life were brought forth from the earth. The bringing forth of different kinds of life involved a definite sequence, and all these kinds of life have symbolic meanings.

The Lowest Life—the Created Life without Consciousness

Plants were the first things that grew on the earth. Plant life is without consciousness. A leaf of grass, a tree, or a flower contains life, but this life is without consciousness; it can neither think nor feel.

After the plant life came forth, the light bearers came—the sun, the moon, and the stars. The appearance of these stronger lights was not for producing life but for strengthening life so that life could grow. Hence, immediately after these lights came forth, a higher life appeared. The stronger the light, the more life grows.

The Lower Life—the Created Life with the Lowest Consciousness

Next, the living creatures in the water were produced. This kind of living creature has some consciousness, but it is the lowest consciousness. Even though this life is a little higher than the plant life, it is still a relatively lower life.

The Slightly Higher Life—
the Created Life with Low Consciousness

Gradually, living creatures in the air came into existence. Their life is higher than the life of the living creatures in the water, but the consciousness of this life is still relatively low.

The Higher Life—
the Created Life with Higher Consciousness

Next, cattle and beasts on the earth came into existence. As the consciousness of the life increases step by step, the level of life also increases step by step.

The Superior Life—the Created Life
with the Highest Consciousness

Last, man was created as the center of the universe. Among all the creatures man has the highest life with the highest consciousness, a consciousness that is higher than all other creatures. However, in the whole universe man does not have the highest consciousness nor the highest life; God has the highest life with the highest consciousness.

In summary, we can see clearly that the center of God's creation is life. God first created inanimate things and then living creatures. Then, with regard to the living creatures, He began by creating the lowest living creatures, going up level by level to the highest living creatures.

GOD PLACING HIMSELF AS THE TREE OF LIFE AND SATAN AS THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL BEFORE MAN

After God created man, He placed Himself as the tree of life and Satan as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in front of man, who had the highest life of all His creatures, so that man would choose according to his own will. Man could choose God and receive life, or choose Satan and receive death. The tree of life signifies God, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil signifies Satan. God put these two trees in front of the man whom He created, allowing man to choose.

GOD WANTING MAN TO RECEIVE GOD AS THE TREE OF LIFE AND THUS RECEIVE LIFE, BUT NOT WANTING MAN TO RECEIVE ANYTHING OUTSIDE OF GOD AS THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL AND THUS RECEIVE DEATH

Although man has the highest life in God's creation, he does not have the highest life in the universe. The highest life in the universe is God. In His creation God did not put Himself into man; the created man did not have the uncreated life of God within him. Instead, God placed Himself in front of man as the tree of life in order to be received by man. God, however, also warned man that there was a third party in the universe besides God and man—Satan, as signified by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He also warned man that if he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die. God placed these two trees in front of man because He wanted man to receive Him as life; He did not want man to touch Satan and receive death.

MAN, DECEIVED BY SATAN, TOUCHING SOMETHING OUTSIDE OF GOD, AS THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL AND THUS RECEIVING DEATH

Genesis 3 shows us that man was deceived by Satan and partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thus fell into death. From this point on, the entire account of the Old Testament speaks of man turning away from the tree of life to touch the things outside of God, as the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil. We usually divide the Old Testament into three parts: the section on history from Genesis to Esther, the section on experience from Job to Song of Songs, and the section on prophecy from Isaiah to Malachi. Let us look at the line of life in these three sections.

From Genesis 3 to Esther

The historical record from Genesis 3 to Esther shows how man turned away from the tree of life to touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When man turned away from God, he lived according to evil. In Genesis 3 Adam and Eve rebelled against God; they were short of love and even spoke lies. In Genesis 4 a person killed his own brother. At the end of Genesis 4 evil things, such as taking many wives, having multiple marriages, indulging in the flesh, and brutal murders were occurring. The earth was filled with violence prior to the flood. At the tower of Babel mankind collectively rebelled against God and worshipped idols. This continued with Sodom's evil and fornication and Egypt's rebellion against God. Even the children of Israel worshipped idols, and in their midst there was an abundance of wickedness. From 1 and 2 Samuel through Esther sin is present among all the people. The seventeen books of history are a record of man leaving the tree of life and touching the evil aspect of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; man left God and lived in sin.

In this period of history there was a small number of godly men like Abel, Enosh, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and some among the children of Israel, who were shown God's mercy and saved by God from the evil of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They learned to live in the principle of the tree of life, which was to turn away from sin and to live before God. However, this was only a small number of people.

From Job to Song of Songs

The books of experience portray the experiences of the godly saints. With them God encountered another kind of problem. Although they knew the difference between the evil of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the life of the tree of life, they could not discern the difference between the good of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the life of the tree of life. They knew that evil was not life, but they did not know that good was not life. They renounced evil and desired to draw near to God by doing good,

supposing that evil was enmity with God but that good was not. They believed that evil was not of the tree of life but that good was of the tree of life. Therefore, while these ones renounced evil, they kept their own goodness.

The book of Job begins with a man who feared God and turned away from evil, who was blameless, perfect, and upright. However, God struck him and consumed him; God wanted to rid him of his goodness. When I was newly saved, I was puzzled when I read the book of Job. I asked, "O God, why would You strike such a good man? Even You testified that Job turned away from evil, feared You, and was perfect and upright. Even Satan could not accuse him of anything. Why would You strike such a good man?" At that time I really defended Job's case. I felt that it was fitting to punish a person such as myself, but it was a great injustice to punish Job. Some said that all of God's discipline is for our benefit and that Job was being disciplined by God. When I heard this, I was even less convinced. Discipline is given because someone has done something wrong; but Job had not done anything wrong. So why was he being disciplined? Gradually, God opened my eyes, and I realized that God struck Job, not because he was bad but because he was too good. God did not want to deal with Job's evil but with his good; Job's good had replaced God. Job was full of good, but he lacked God; he had the good of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but he lacked the life of the tree of life.

Even Job's three friends were as confused as Job. They thought that since God could do no wrong and would never be unjust, then surely those who had been struck by God must be at fault. The more they spoke, the more defiant Job became. Job seemed to say, "Surely that is not true! I will find the Almighty and argue with Him in order to see where I am at fault. You are more at fault than I am; yet you are not being punished. Why is this happening?"

More than ten years ago God put me through a very severe trial. At that time I was confused, so I deeply examined my conscience; I truly desired God, loved God, and was willing to live for God, yet the situation was unbearable. In the midst of the trial I was weak and short of faith, and nothing happened no matter how earnestly I prayed. Like Job's friends, a few brothers and sisters came to see me and said, "God is never wrong; we should always examine ourselves before God." I said to myself, "I have been lying sick for a few months, and every day I examine my faults and confess them thousands of times. But the more I confess, the weaker I become. What should I do?"

These friends of Job were truly physicians of no value, waterless clouds who could only speak groundless accusations that were of no help to anyone. None of Job's three friends could help him. In the end these men's words ran out; even Job himself stopped speaking. Then God came in a whirlwind and asked Job many questions. These questions had nothing to do with evil or good, and they could be answered only when God Himself was the answer. After the last question was asked, Job could only prostrate himself in the dust, saying, "I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, / But now my eye has seen You; / Therefore I abhor myself" (42:5-6). He abhorred not his sin but his good self. Here at last was a good man defeated by God, a perfect man fallen to the ground, and a good man bankrupted. He understood that God does not want man to receive either the evil or the good of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; rather, He wants man to receive the life of the tree of life.

In Psalms, the saints' concept still is not detached from good. Psalm 1:1-2 says, according to the concept of the saint, "Blessed is the man / Who does not walk / In the counsel of the wicked, / Nor stand on the path of sinners, / Nor sit in the seat of mockers; / Rather his delight is in the law of Jehovah, / And in His law he meditates by day and by night." These words altogether emphasize the matter of good and evil. Immediately after these words in Psalm 1, verses 6 and 12 of Psalm 2 say, "I have installed My King / Upon Zion, My holy mountain. / ...Kiss the Son / ...Blessed are all those who take refuge in Him." These verses do not say that those who do good, forsake evil, and keep the law are blessed; it says that those who draw near to the Son of God are blessed. These two psalms are the opposite of each other. The saints' concept was to keep the law and do good; God's concept is Christ. The entire book of Psalms is structured in this way. It shows us that the concept of the saints is related to good, but the revelation of God is related to Christ. However, because the saints feared God and lived before God, the Spirit of Christ had a position within them. Therefore, when they uttered something about their goodness and merit, the Holy Spirit took the opportunity to speak forth Christ. This kind of situation continues throughout the five books of poetry.

When we come to Song of Songs, however, we see that it has absolutely nothing to do with good and evil. Instead, it is altogether a story of the fellowship between the beloved and his counterpart. Song of Songs is altogether about a girl pursuing her beloved and taking her beloved as the object and the center.

In the Old Testament the books of history show us that most people turned away from God and lived in evil; only a small number of people were saved from evil to live in God, taking God as their life. The books of poetry show us that there was a group of saints who were willing to live in good and focus on good. Nevertheless, they did not understand that God desired to be their unique life. Therefore, God came in to strike them and correct them so that they would abandon their own goodness and live in God, taking Him as their unique life, being united with God, being in fellowship with God, and being joined to God as one. This is the second part of the Old Testament.

From Isaiah to Malachi

The third part of the Old Testament, the section on the prophets, shows us that the prophets were fully released from good as well as from evil to live in the Spirit. In principle, a prophet lives altogether in life. If you could speak with any of the prophets, they would say, "I do not know what good or evil is; I only know the Spirit. When the Spirit of Jehovah comes upon me, I say whatever He wants me to say, and I do whatever He wants me to do." Therefore, a prophet is free from good and evil to live in God and to walk fully according to the Spirit. This is the tree of life.

The first part of the Old Testament concerns man living in evil; the second part concerns man living in good; and the third part concerns man living in the Spirit. The entire Old Testament shows us how God desires that man would receive Him as life and escape death by staying away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is outside of God. The prophecies spoken by the prophets in the Spirit all emphasize the coming One who is man's salvation and man's way before God. Therefore, the prophets usher us into the New Testament.

GOD BECOMING FLESH
THAT MAN MIGHT RECEIVE HIM AS LIFE

In the New Testament the One prophesied by the prophets came; He was God manifested in the flesh so that man might receive Him as life. This is seen in the four Gospels.

THE LORD RELEASING HIMSELF

THROUGH DEATH AND RESURRECTION
TO BE RECEIVED BY MAN AS LIFE

This is seen at the end of the Gospels.

THE LORD COMING TO MAN
AS THE SPIRIT AFTER RESURRECTION
AND ENTERING INTO MAN TO BE MAN'S LIFE

This is seen in the book of Acts.

THE LORD BEING LIFE WITHIN MAN,
ISSUING IN THE CHURCH
AND IN THE BUILDING UP
OF THE CHURCH AS GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

This is seen in the Epistles.

ALL THOSE WHO ARE NOT OF THE LORD'S LIFE
AND NOT BUILT INTO THE CHURCH
BEING JUDGED BY HIM AND BURNED BY FIRE,
ENDING UP IN THE SAME WAY AS SATAN

This is seen in Revelation.

ONLY THOSE WHO ALLOW THE LORD
TO BE THEIR LIFE
AND WHO ARE BUILT INTO THE CHURCH
BEING IN THE NEW JERUSALEM
AS HE IS IN THE NEW JERUSALEM

This is seen at the end of Revelation.

A CONCLUDING WORD

On the one hand, God's work throughout the ages is to work Himself into man as the tree of life, and on the other hand, to completely eliminate the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which denotes Satan, from the universe by casting it into the lake of fire. Of the two trees in the universe, one is wrought into the New Jerusalem as the tree of life for the building up of the New Jerusalem, and the other one is wrought into the lake of fire as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree of death, to become the center of the lake of fire. Thus, there are two trees, two spheres, and two destinations. The tree of life has the New Jerusalem as its sphere and destination; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil has the lake of fire as its sphere and destination. All persons and things joined to the tree of life throughout the ages will end up in the New Jerusalem; all persons and things joined to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil will end up in the lake of fire. Life is always with the tree of life; death is always with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LINE OF BUILDING

The Bible shows us that God's coming to be man's life is for His building. God is building His eternal dwelling place with Himself as life and man as the material. Therefore, on the one hand, life is a line that runs through the Scriptures, and on the other hand, building is also a line that runs through the Scriptures. Actually, these two lines are two sides of the same line; they are inseparable. Wherever there is life, there is building. Life and building cannot be separated.

From the beginning Genesis 2 shows the story of life by speaking of the tree of life; at the same time, it also shows us building materials—gold, bdellium, and onyx stone. When we first read the Bible, we may not be clear why it speaks of gold, bdellium, and onyx stone. But when we read further, we can see that these materials are for God's building. This is because we see the manifestation of a building at the end of the Bible, one which has been built with gold, pearl, and precious stones and in which there is the tree of life.

In the universe the New Jerusalem shows us the story of life and building. Life is inward—the center; building is outward—the perimeter. Life is for building, and building is the issue of life. Therefore, these two points are really two sides of the same matter. We can never separate life and building. Where there is life, there is building. However, we need to look at these two lines separately so that we may understand them more clearly. In the previous chapter we saw the line of life; now we will look at the line of building.

GOD'S DESIRE

The Bible is the explanation of God; even more, it is the explanation of God's desire. What does God desire to gain in the universe? This is a big question. Many saints have tried to tell us what God is doing in the universe, yet their explanations never hit the mark. In the recent years we have gradually come to see very clearly, based on the Word of God, that God's desire is to gain a city—the New Jerusalem. This is because the whole Bible, from the beginning to the end, ultimately shows us that God gains the New Jerusalem. God in Christ puts Himself into the city and makes His home in

the city. When the city is manifested, God is fully satisfied. God can rest, because that city is also His resting place.

If we are willing to take the time to survey the entire Bible, we will see clearly the focus of God's desire. In the beginning of Genesis God did not have a home. Isaiah 66:1 clearly says that even though heaven was His throne and the earth was His footstool, He did not have a resting place. He did not have a place in which He could dwell; He did not have a place in which He could rest. He was a God without a dwelling place; He was a homeless God. Therefore, He created. In particular, He created man. If we read on from Genesis 1 in a thorough way, we can see so many pictures, each one being more definite and more clearly drawn than the one preceding it. The final picture will show that this once homeless God has been able to make His home in a city, a city that is His eternal dwelling place, His eternal resting place. Once we have gained this perspective, we will understand that God's eternal desire is to gain a resting place. Therefore, what God is doing in this universe is building His dwelling place.

GOD BUILDING WITH HIMSELF AS LIFE

The Bible shows us two crucial points. First, God wants to gain a dwelling place in the universe; second, God is building this dwelling place with Himself as life. Therefore, in the beginning of Genesis, immediately after God created man, He placed Himself as the tree of life in front of man for man to eat and receive. God put Himself in front of man in the form of the tree of life. According to His concept, God is not concerned with man worshipping or serving Him; He cares that man would receive Him and take Him in as food so that He can become man's inward enjoyment and inward element.

God is doing this so that He and man can be built together. If He wanted man only to worship and serve Him, man would not need to be built by Him. In order for man to be built with Him, He must enter into man and mingle with man to become man's inward element. Therefore, after He created man, He did not appear to man as One sitting on a throne to be worshipped and served. Instead, He put Himself as an edible tree in front of man to be received.

How do we know that His becoming man's inward element and man's life are for building? As we have said numerous times, Genesis 2 is a picture. In

the beginning we see the tree of life growing, and later, we see a river flowing. Both the tree and the river are symbols; they both signify life. Next, wherever the river flows, there is gold, bdellium, and onyx stone. These are materials for building. Later, when the children of Israel erected the tabernacle, the things inside the tabernacle were made of pure gold, and precious stones were mounted on the breastplate and the shoulder pieces of the high priest. When the high priest entered into the tabernacle, only pure gold and precious stones could be seen. Thus, we should realize that gold, pearl, and precious stones are for building. After the temple was built and the high priest entered into the temple with his shoulder pieces and breastplate, it was a scene still full of gold and precious stones. In the New Testament the apostle Paul says that the church is built with gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Cor. 3:12). In the end, when the New Jerusalem is manifested, the city is altogether of gold, pearl, and precious stones.

Thus, when we compare the two pictures in Genesis 2 and Revelation 21, we see that the first picture reveals life and building materials, but the materials have not yet been built together. The final picture not only has life and building materials, but the materials have been built into a building. This shows us that God's building is accomplished when He enters into man to become man's element and man's life. The entire Bible shows us that God comes to be man's life for the sake of His building. God's building work is being carried out in whomever has God's life; God's building is accomplished through Him as life.

SATAN'S PREEMPTIVE COUNTERFEIT

God wanted to build His dwelling place with man as the material, but before this task was accomplished, Satan came in to lure away the man that God wanted to use. In order to restore fallen man, however, God established a way of redemption for man through a sacrifice—the killing of the lamb and the shedding of its blood—so that he might come back to God. However, Satan came in again and caused man to refuse and reject God's way of redemption. Consequently, man fell under the hand of Satan.

The first thing Cain did after he had followed Satan was to build the city of Enoch (Gen. 4:17). The last city in the Bible is the New Jerusalem, and the first city is the city of Enoch built by Cain. This city was the beginning of man producing a culture for himself, making a living for his existence, and fully

cooperating with Satan and setting God aside. The ultimate city, the New Jerusalem, will be the union of man and God, the expression of God within man; yet the city of Enoch was the expression of Satan within man. Therefore, the city of Enoch was developed to the extent of being filled with every manner of evil and corruption, and Satan's evil nature was fully expressed through it.

When God could tolerate it no longer, He destroyed this city with the flood. God's destruction of the people of that generation included His destruction of that city. But out of that city God saved Noah and his family of eight so that they might serve Him in another position.

However, some of Noah's descendants still followed and cooperated with Satan; so Satan's second city appeared—the city of Babel. God destroyed the first city, but Satan built a second city. The city of Babel is the city of Babylon; *Babel* is Hebrew and *Babylon* is Greek. From this point on, a city in opposition to Jerusalem has been in existence.

Beginning with Genesis 11 the Bible repeatedly shows us two cities—the city of Babel and the city of Jerusalem. Babel is the city of Satan, a building related to the union of man and the devil; Jerusalem is a building related to the union of man and God. Throughout the whole Bible, Babel is always in opposition to Jerusalem. At the city of Babel the joint rebellion of Satan and man against God reached its peak. Man rejected God's authority and wanted to exalt himself to the heavens to replace God. Therefore, God was forced to come down and confound his language; He judged man. Both of these cities were preemptive counterfeits by Satan to keep God from completing His building.

GOD'S SELECTION

After the judgment of Babel, God called Abraham out of this place of man's rebellion, out from among the rebellious people. God called him out of Babel, telling him to leave his land, his relatives, and his father's house and to go to the land of Canaan. God promised the land of Canaan to him and to his seed for the building of God's dwelling place.

God promised Abraham a portion of land and a group of descendants. The portion of land was the base for the building work, and the group of

descendants were the materials for the building work. God's intention was to build the seed of Abraham, the children of Israel, into God's dwelling place in the land of Canaan. This was God's selection.

GOD'S REVELATION

God chose Abraham, called him, and promised him a portion of land and a group of descendants. At that time Abraham did not fully understand why God gave him such a promise. When Abraham passed away, his son Isaac inherited this promise. When Isaac passed away, Jacob came. We all know the story of Jacob. As a young man, Jacob fled to a distant land because he offended his brother. Genesis 28 says that while he was fleeing from his brother, he spent the night in the wilderness and received a revelation in a dream—a revelation concerning Bethel. When Jacob went to sleep, his pillow was a stone. In his dream a ladder was set up on the earth, and it reached to heaven. Angels of God were ascending and descending on it, and Jehovah was standing above it and speaking to him. After he woke up, he said that this place was the gate of heaven. He called the name of this place Bethel—the house of God. He also took the stone from under his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it, saying that the stone would be the house of God, Bethel. Through a dream God revealed His need and desire to have a house.

The significance of this dream is very rich. First, the dream reveals a homeless man and a homeless God. At that time Jacob was a wandering homeless man, and even God did not have a home in the universe. Second, this dream shows that God's house links heaven and earth and joins God and man. Third, God's house is not merely a place but a stone with oil poured upon it. It is not merely the land of Luz; it is Jacob, represented by a stone with oil poured upon it, becoming Bethel, the house of God.

A stone denotes a regenerated person. Previously, we were clay, but once we receive the Lord and His life, we are changed in nature to become a stone. As soon as Peter confessed that the Lord was the Christ, the Lord said to him, "You are Peter" (Matt. 16:18). Peter means "a stone." Later, in his Epistle Peter says that the believers are living stones who are being built up as a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5). In the Bible oil always signifies the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the manifestation of God, the transfiguration of God, and God's reaching of man and entering into man. Oil being poured upon the stone signifies God reaching man and entering into man to be in union with

him. This union of God and man is the house of God, Bethel. At this point, God's desire to have a house in the universe was revealed.

Without Bethel, man would be homeless on the earth and God would not have a resting place in the universe. Both God and man need this house. This house, which links heaven and earth and joins God and man, is built up with God as oil poured upon those who are saved as stones.

SATAN'S USURPATION

Even though Jacob dreamed this dream and received a vision, he foolishly still went on to his uncle Laban in Paddan-aram and foolishly returned from Paddan-aram to Canaan, the land of his father and his ancestors. Later, due to the matter of eating, he went down to Egypt with his sons, altogether forgetting God's revelation. While in Egypt, his descendants cared only for the matter of eating and ended up falling under Satan's usurpation. As Abraham's grandson, Jacob was the seed of Abraham, and his descendants were also the seed of Abraham. God promised seed to Abraham as building materials; but due to the matter of eating, this seed went down to Egypt and was usurped by Satan.

First, Abraham went down to Egypt for food. Then Jacob and his descendants went down to Egypt and stayed there for food. In the entire Bible, whenever God's people went down to Egypt, it was always for food and pleasure. Egypt had an abundance of food, and the Nile was rich in its produce; so there was food and pleasure. However, do not forget that while the world gives food and pleasure, it also usurps. If we desire its food and pleasure, we will be under its usurpation. Thus, God's people, whom God prepared as building materials, were kept in Egypt and usurped by Satan.

While the children of Israel were in Egypt, the Bible specifically says that Pharaoh ordered them to build two cities. They had to find straw and make fire to burn clay bricks for building these cities. All these stories have significance in the Bible. As the people of God, the children of Israel should have been building a dwelling place for God. However, due to their desire for food and pleasure, they fell into bondage under the hand of the Egyptians and were building two cities for Pharaoh instead. The city of God is built with gold and precious stones, but the cities of Egypt, like the city of Babel, were built with bricks of clay. Babel is opposite of Jerusalem; Egypt, from another

direction, also is opposite of Jerusalem. According to the books of prophecy, when God's people were not firm in their standing, they either went to Babylon or went down to Egypt. These two places—Egypt and Babylon—are in rivalry with Jerusalem; they are in opposition to Jerusalem. In Babel man built a city with bricks of clay; in Egypt man also built cities with bricks of clay. These cities were clayish and earthly, and they were for man; they were not heavenly, and they were not for God. God wants His people to build a heavenly dwelling place, but the children of Israel fell to Egypt and were usurped by Pharaoh to build earthly cities for Satan.

GOD'S DELIVERANCE

Of course, God could not tolerate His building materials remaining in Egypt under Satan's usurpation, so He came in to deliver the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. After God delivered them, He charged them to set up a tabernacle for Him, in which all the furnishings and boards had to be overlaid with gold and the breastplate and the shoulder pieces of the high priest had to be inlaid with precious stones. In Egypt the children of Israel built Egyptian cities with bricks of clay; after they came out of Egypt, they built God's tabernacle with gold and precious stones. What a great difference there is when the two cities are compared!

GOD'S FULFILLMENT

After God delivered the children of Israel, His desire was fulfilled to a certain extent—the children of Israel erected a tabernacle for God. Even though the tabernacle was only temporary and physical, God filled it with His glory, taking it as His dwelling place after its erection. Strictly speaking, the tabernacle was only a figure; God's real dwelling place was the children of Israel. The tabernacle symbolized the children of Israel coordinated to become God's dwelling place. God's dwelling in the tabernacle indicates His dwelling among the children of Israel. This is clearly seen at the end of Exodus 29.

After the children of Israel came to the foot of Mount Sinai and became a corporate entity, in the eyes of God, they were His spiritual house. However, in their midst God had a symbol, a figure—the tabernacle. The tabernacle being among them signified that they were a group of people who were coordinated and built up to become the dwelling place of God. God had a

visible dwelling place on the earth, and His glory was able to rest in this tabernacle. At this point God's desire was fulfilled in figure.

SATAN'S CORRUPTION

After setting up the tabernacle under God's leading, the children of Israel went on their journey, defeated enemies on the way, entered Canaan, destroyed enemies in the land, possessed the entire land, and set up and established the tabernacle at Shiloh. Finally, God had a secure dwelling place. Satan, however, came in again to corrupt, in particular, the priests who served God in the tabernacle. During Eli's time his two sons, who were priests, were very corrupt; they represented the corruptness of all the children of Israel. Not only was the house of Eli corrupt, but the house of Israel was also corrupt. Consequently, the tabernacle and the Ark were both devastated; the Ark was captured, and the tabernacle became desolate. This was Satan's corruption of God's building, God's house, on the earth.

GOD'S VICTORY

While Satan was carrying out his corrupting work, God raised up Samuel, a Nazarite of voluntary consecration. While the house of Eli was utterly forsaking God, Samuel was absolutely seeking God. According to the account in 1 Samuel, the boy Samuel was in complete contrast to the house of Eli. The house of Eli forsook God, but the boy Samuel sought God. Due to Samuel's rising up, King David was brought in. Samuel was the heir of the preceding age and a forerunner of the subsequent age. Before Samuel there were priests and judges, and since Samuel was both a priest and a judge, he was an heir of the preceding age. After Samuel there were kings and prophets. Samuel was a prophet who brought in the kingship. He was truly a pivotal figure who gained the inheritance from the preceding age and ushered in the succeeding age. It was Samuel who brought in David.

Once David was raised up, he had the desire to find a resting place for the Ark of God, so he wanted to build a temple for God. However, God allowed him only to prepare the materials. It was his son Solomon who rose up and completed the building of the temple. The temple was more permanent and solid than the tabernacle. On the day of the completion of the building of the temple, the glory of God filled the temple in an unprecedented way. This signified that God had come to the earth to dwell among the children of Israel

in an unprecedented way because He had a secure and solid building on the earth.

SATAN'S DESTRUCTION

Regrettably, this condition did not last long; Satan's destruction came in once again. Just as he had corrupted the tabernacle, he also destroyed the temple. The descendants of Solomon were corrupt, and the house of Israel became desolate; as a result, the Babylonians came. We need to remember that Abraham came out of Babylon, and after he came to the land of Canaan, his descendants built Jerusalem. The Babylonians, sent by Satan, pushed their way into Jerusalem; they destroyed the city, tore down the temple, and carried the descendants of Abraham back to Babylon, to the very place from which Abraham had been delivered. Even the vessels in the temple for the worship of God were carried away to Babylon and placed in the temple of idols. All this shows how Babylon is opposed to God's building.

GOD'S RECOVERY

At the fulfillment of the seventy years of the captivity of the children of Israel, Ezra brought a group of people back to rebuild the holy temple, and Nehemiah brought a group of people back to rebuild the holy city. The recovery of the children of Israel was the recovery of the building. The children of Israel were free to return to Jerusalem; this did not stir up any opposition. But when they wanted to build the holy temple and the holy city, enemies from all around rose up to oppose them. Here I would like to tell the children of God that there might not be any opposition today as we recover spiritual truth; however, if we are here to recover the building, the enemy will definitely do all he can to oppose this. Satan may allow the recovery of God's people, but he will fight the recovery of God's building. This is where Nehemiah's faithfulness was demonstrated. The book of Nehemiah speaks of how Nehemiah went to Jerusalem and inspected its walls; all his thoughts and concerns were on these walls, that is, on the building. He held a sword with one hand and worked with the other hand. He was fighting while he was building (Neh. 4:17). Where there is building, there is warfare, because what the enemy hates the most is the building work. This brings us to the end of the Old Testament. All these are merely symbols; the tabernacle is a symbol, and Jerusalem is also a symbol.

GOD'S TABERNACLING AMONG MEN

The building work in the Old Testament was merely a figure; in the New Testament God actually comes to carry out His building work. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." Here we see that the incarnation of the Lord Jesus was God's tabernacling among men. In John 2 the Lord Jesus also said that the flesh He put on was the temple of God and that the Jews would destroy this temple, but in three days He would raise it up (v. 19). We should not apply the Lord's raising up of the temple in three days just to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Himself. We should realize that when the Lord Jesus resurrected, He also regenerated all of us who belong to Him (1 Pet. 1:3); thus, in resurrection He built all of us who have received His life into a mystical Body, which is the temple of God. Before the Lord went through death and resurrection, His body was merely His own body. But after His death and resurrection He gained another Body. This is His mystical Body, a corporate Body, which is the church. This Body is the temple that God intends to build in the universe. When the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build My church," He was referring to this building.

THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH

According to the major part of the record of the New Testament, the building of the church involves the Lord Jesus coming as the Spirit with His resurrection life to those who have received Him in order to build them as living stones into His Body, the living temple of God. Peter says that the believers "as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:5). Paul also says that we are the Body of Christ, "being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit" (Eph. 2:22). Moreover, Paul says that as God's fellow workers, the apostles were working together with God for His building (1 Cor. 3:9).

I would like to tell you, brothers and sisters, that in all of Paul's Epistles, all the words rendered "edify" in Chinese are *build* in Greek. Today the so-called "edification of the saints" among Christians actually means "building up of the saints" in the original language. Today God's emphasis is not on edification but on building. Edification is for building. Edification causes people to become vessels and materials; building coordinates the vessels, the materials, together so that they become a dwelling place. The ultimate teaching in the New Testament is not for individual spirituality but for our

being built together. Individual spirituality certainly has its value, but without being built together, we cannot attain God's goal. God's ultimate goal is not to gain neatly edified stones but to gain a complete, built-up dwelling place.

THE COMPLETION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

When the church is built up, a city will be manifested. The final scene, the last picture in the Bible, is a city, which is God's tabernacle, God's dwelling place on the earth among men. It is also the bride whom Christ will marry. The New Jerusalem is built with all those who are saved in the Old Testament and the New Testament, and it is also the crystallization of God's work on the earth throughout the ages. The ultimate crystallization of God's work of saving people, leading people, and perfecting people throughout the ages is so that they may be built up together to become His eternal dwelling place.

We need to remember that the New Jerusalem is always opposed by the city of Babylon built by Satan. In Revelation we see two women and two cities. One is the harlot, the city of Babylon, and the other is the holy woman, the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the union of God and man; the city of Babylon is the collusion of Satan and man. The work that God is doing on the earth today is to build the New Jerusalem; the work that Satan is doing among people is to organize the city of Babylon. Just as the New Jerusalem is God's dwelling place, Babylon is Satan's lodging place. Just as the New Jerusalem is the expression of God among redeemed humanity, Babylon is the manifestation of Satan among fallen humanity. However, in the end God destroys Babylon, and in Revelation 19 and 21 the New Jerusalem is manifested. At this point God's building work will be complete.

The Bible presents the tree of life and some materials—gold, bdellium, and precious stones at the beginning; at the end a city built with gold, pearl, and precious stones is manifested, having the tree of life as its content. This is the building that God wants to gain in the universe.

CHAPTER SIX

THE LINE OF THE KINGDOM

The three lines of life, building, and the kingdom are closely connected. God's desire is to build His dwelling place, and the building is through His life. At the same time, in the building of life, there must also be God's authority; otherwise, the possibility of life and building would be out of the question.

The Bible reveals that the New Jerusalem at the end of Revelation is God's building. In the center of the New Jerusalem there is the throne of God and of the Lamb, out from which proceeds a river. This picture shows that if God is not reigning on the throne, He will not have an expression of life, as signified by the river of water of life, or be the supply of life, as signified by the tree of life. The God reigning on the throne is the source of life. It is the same in our experience. Whenever God is not reigning, the flow of the stream of life stops. In order for there to be a supply of life, God must be on the throne. This is the principle in all our living, in the church, and in the universe. Wherever God reigns, God's life is expressed. The building of God is possible only when there is the reign of the throne and the expression of life.

Satan was originally an archangel created by God, yet one day he became the center of death, because he utterly overthrew God's authority. Within him, he fully denied God's authority. Consequently, all that was in him was death. Without God's authority there cannot be anything of God's life; wherever God's authority is overthrown, death is manifested. Therefore, the kingdom, life, and building are connected. When there is a throne, there can be the flow of the water of life, and only then can the building work begin.

This is the picture in Genesis 2. When Adam was created and placed in the garden of Eden, he was not only in the image of God to represent God, but he also was the head over all things to reign for God. He reigned as the representative of the Creator, the sovereign Lord. Next, God wanted Adam to touch life, signified by the tree of life. This means that in order for there to be an expansion of God's authority, we must first allow life to flow. When the river of water of life flows, we see gold, pearl, and precious stones. God's authority issues in the flow of life for the building.

These three lines—life, building, and the kingdom—are like a threefold cord to become the most important line in the Bible. If we read the Bible in a thorough way, we will discover that these three matters are the greatest delights to God's heart. He wants man to receive life, to be built up, and to submit to authority.

GOD'S GOAL

From the words in Matthew 6:9-10 spoken by the Lord Jesus to the disciples concerning how to pray, we can see that the kingdom is God's goal. The Lord said, "Your kingdom come." Preceding this word He said, "Your name be sanctified," and following this word He said, "Your will be done...on earth." Whether or not God's name is sanctified and whether or not God's will is done on earth depends on whether God's kingdom has authority. At the end the Lord provided the reason for this kind of prayer, saying, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory" (v. 13). First, there must be the kingdom as a realm, and then there can be the exercise of authority and the expression of glory.

The kingdom is a sphere of reigning, and in this sphere authority can be exercised. When authority is exercised, glory is expressed. Only in such a sphere is there the kingdom. God desires to gain a universe in which He can reign so that through His reigning He can express His glory. God's goal on the earth is to gain this kingdom. When God obtains such a kingdom, God's name will be sanctified, His will will be done on earth as in heaven, His authority will be exercised, and His glory will be expressed. God's goal is to gain such a kingdom.

GOD'S ORIGINAL CREATION

After God created the universe, He put it under the authority of a created archangel, who was a cherub. According to Luke 4:6, God gave this ruling authority to the archangel so that he might be the representative of God's authority in the universe.

SATAN'S REBELLION

However, due to pride this archangel uplifted himself and rebelled against God. This is clearly described in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14. In Isaiah 14:13-14

he said that he would exalt his throne to make himself like God, indicating that he would overthrow God's throne and destroy God's kingdom. Brothers and sisters, we should remember that in those two verses Satan declared "I will" five times. He became God's adversary in the universe because of his rebellion. The Hebrew word for Satan means "adversary."

GOD'S RESTORATION

After Satan rebelled against God, ages went by before God came to restore His creation. The center of this restoration was man. God gave man authority to rule over the universe. Genesis 1:27 says that man was created in the image of God. Then verse 28 says that God gave man the authority to rule. Man was to represent God, express God, and reign for God. Although God wanted man to have dominion over heaven, over the earth, and over the sea, the emphasis was on dominion over the earth. Man was placed on the earth because Satan's revolt against God took place on the earth. The serpent, a figure of Satan, was the head of the creeping things on the earth, as seen in Genesis 3. God's desire for man to have dominion over the earth, especially over the creeping things, means that God wanted man to deal with the sphere of Satan's activity.

MAN'S FALL

God wanted man to represent Him, express Him, and reign for Him. However, man first needed to contact the life of God. Therefore, after God created man, He put man in front of the tree of life so that man might contact the tree of life. Regrettably, before man could contact the tree of life, Satan came and deceived man. After following Satan, man fell because he violated God's commandment and thus was involved with God's authority.

GOD'S REDEMPTION

After man's fall, God came and instituted the way of redemption to restore man. Genesis 3:21 says that God made coats of skins for man and clothed him. Through the slaughtering of an animal and the shedding of its blood, God redeemed man and put man back under His authority.

SATAN'S DECEPTION

At the end of Genesis 4 Satan came in again to deceive man, causing man to establish his own righteousness instead of relying on God's redemption. As a

result, man left God and again fell into Satan's hand. This was the way taken by Cain and his descendants. Since man lost God's care and rejected God's way of redemption, man began to make a living on his own and invent a culture for himself. Self-justification is a matter of morality, self-dependence is a matter of existence, and self-invention is a matter of living and culture. When human culture developed to this extent, the earth was filled with wickedness and violence. Eventually, this provoked God to destroy that generation by the flood.

The principle of Satan's deceiving of Cain and his descendants can be applied to many people. Wherever there is self-justification, there is self-dependence, and where there is self-dependence, there is self-invention. The result of these three things is a profusion of evil and violence. This principle is true for an individual, and it holds true for a nation as well.

Mankind incurred God's judgment in the first stage of their culture, yet God saved Noah's family of eight through the ark and gave man the authority over others (9:6). Man was originally under divine government, but because man sinned and fell, man came under the government of the conscience, which was the age of self-government. Later, man fell again, and God put man under human government. The characteristic of the age of human government is man's ruling over other men. However, the descendants of man were deceived by Satan again and utilized God's authority to establish many nations on the earth. Among them was Nimrod, the first of the mighty ones (10:8). Nimrod was ferocious and warlike; he was the first among the people to establish a kingdom and set himself up as a king. Satan deceived man by instigating man to use his God-given authority to establish many nations on the earth. Satan is ruling behind every nation. So in the end the children of men rose up to rebel against God collectively, joining themselves together to build the city of Babel and the tower of Babel. There they joined hands with Satan to declare that the humans on earth would renounce the God who is in heaven and would not recognize the name of God. At this point mankind had fallen to the uttermost, and so God executed His judgment again, confounding their language and scattering them over the whole earth.

GOD'S CALLING

If the created man had not fallen, God's creation would have been sufficient; God's calling would not have been necessary. However, once man became

fallen and the entire human race followed Satan, God had to come and set apart a group of people. The beginning of the setting apart is the calling.

At the time of Babel the descendants of Adam had fallen entirely, so God came to sound a call. Every calling in the Bible is a proof that man has fallen. Every time God calls, it is a setting apart by God, a new beginning initiated by God. Adam was the father of the created race, and Abraham was the father of the called race. The Adamic race fell, so God began anew and called Abraham to be the head, the father, of a new race.

Therefore, when Abraham was called, God wanted him to leave his land, his relatives, and his father's house. This was necessary in order to be completely separated from the rebellion of the men on earth against God. God does not want our living to have any element of Babel. What is Babel? Babel is man's denial of God's authority. All of today's degraded Christianity is Babylon in the eyes of God. God wants us to be completely rid of the things of Babel.

Furthermore, when God called Abraham, He said that He would make of Abraham a great nation, a great kingdom (Gen. 12:2). This kingdom would include the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, the church in the New Testament, the millennial kingdom in the next age, and the new heaven and new earth in eternity; it would be an eternal kingdom. It is Abraham's nation, but more so, it is God's kingdom. This shows us that God wants to reign on the earth in this kingdom.

After being called, Abraham stood in the heavenly position in Canaan as the outlet of heaven on the earth. He was a man on the earth under the rule of heaven, a man on the earth as the outlet of heaven, one who was connected to heaven. Therefore, after Abraham's return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were in alliance with him, the king of Sodom offered his possessions to Abraham, but Abraham said that he would not accept them and that his possessions were not on the earth but in the heavens. Melchizedek prayed to God as the "Possessor of heaven and earth" when he was blessing Abraham because at this point God had found a man on the earth who would be ruled by Him and through whom the authority in heaven could be exercised on the earth.

EGYPT'S USURPATION

Regrettably, before long the descendants of Abraham went down to Egypt due to the need for food. They were lost after going down to Egypt. The children of God should have submitted themselves to God's authority, but instead they submitted themselves to Pharaoh's authority to be under his rule. As a result, God lost the means by which He could reign on earth. God no longer had an outlet on the earth that was linked to heaven.

THE FORMATION OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL

When the children of Israel were usurped by Egypt, they fell away completely from God's authority to Pharaoh's authority, being no longer under the rule of God. At this point, God sent Moses to deliver them with great power. They kept the Passover, came out of Egypt, and crossed the Red Sea. Through the blood of the lamb, God delivered them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and led them to the foot of Mount Sinai (Exo. 19).

When the children of Israel were delivered by God and led to the foot of Mount Sinai, God wanted them to become a kingdom of priests, who, on the one hand, would allow God to have authority among them, and on the other hand, would be a people serving God. When their condition was normal, God exercised His authority through the tabernacle. However, after entering into Canaan, they followed the customs of the Gentiles and wanted to have a man as their king (1 Sam. 8:4-7). Initially, God found Saul and appointed him to be the king, but Saul reigned according to man's will, not according to God's heart. Later, God found David, a man according to His heart (13:14). The nation of Israel was formed, God's authority was exercised among them, and God's glory was expressed among them as well. At this point the nation of Israel reached its golden age. It became the sphere of God's reign, and through it God was able to express His glory.

THE DEFEAT OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL

The good times did not last long. Within a short period of time the nation of Israel was defeated and became desolate. The people lost their nation and were conquered by Babylon. Babel again captured the children of Israel. Babel was the place of man's collective rebellion; it was also the place out of which Abraham had been called by God and set apart. Babel again captured Abraham's descendants, bringing them back to the place from where they had

come so that those who had served God would serve the devil in the temple of Babel. Even the vessels in the holy temple were carried away with them and placed in the temple of Babel. In the books written during this captivity, God is called the God of heaven. God did not have an outlet of heaven on the earth; He lost the means by which He could reign on earth. Therefore, God withdrew back to heaven.

THE RESTORATION OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

Seventy years after the captivity of God's people, men such as Ezra and Nehemiah were raised up; they returned from the land of captivity to recover God's temple and His city, and once more the nation of Israel allowed God's authority to be exercised on the earth. When the nation of Israel was defeated, the priests were defeated first and then the kings. The order was the same in the recovery; first the temple was recovered through Ezra the priest, and then the city was recovered through Nehemiah, a royal descendant. The recovery of the temple was the recovery of the testimony and fellowship; the recovery of the city was the recovery of the authority and the kingdom. At this point God's reign was recovered, and the people of Israel were restored once more.

THE DEFEAT AFTER THE RESTORATION

However, shortly after the restoration the nation of Israel was defeated again. We can see the condition after their defeat in the Gospels. When the Lord Jesus came to the earth, demons were everywhere among the people of Israel. The Israelites would not allow God to reign among them; instead, the devil was reigning in their midst. At that time the kingdom of the devil was among them, not the kingdom of God.

THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS

At this point the Lord Jesus came to the earth. When the Lord came out to preach, the first sentence He spoke was, "The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near" (Matt. 4:17). From this we can see that the Lord's coming was to bring the kingdom of the heavens to the earth and to exercise God's authority among men. Moreover, the Lord told Nicodemus that he must be born anew in order to participate in this kingdom (John 3:3). The Lord also plainly said that the casting out of demons was for the kingdom of God to come to the

earth (Matt. 12:28). The word of the Lord Jesus in Luke 17:21 also shows that His presence in the midst of the children of Israel was the presence of the kingdom of God in their midst, because it was God's authority coming to them. During the three and a half years when the Lord was among the children of Israel, He was the kingdom of God. Although the Lord displayed much power among them, the Israelites still rejected Him; therefore, in Matthew 21:43 the Lord said, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation producing its fruit." This nation is the church.

THE CHURCH AS THE REPLACEMENT

When the church was established on the earth during Pentecost, Peter took the keys of the kingdom of the heavens and opened the door for the Jews and the Gentiles to believe in the Lord. This brought God's authority to the earth so that man could enter into the kingdom of the heavens. At this point the church replaced the Israelites and obtained the position for God to reign.

In John 3 the Lord said that one must be born anew to enter into the kingdom of God. This was the beginning. Colossians 1:13 also says that God delivered us out of the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. All who have turned to the Lord have been delivered out of Satan's authority of darkness and have been transferred into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. Furthermore, 1 Peter 2:9 says, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." People who are saved have become a kingdom of priests, a sphere in which God is able to reign. John 18:36 says that this kingdom is of the heavens, not of the earth. Romans 14:17 says, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." This is the condition of God's spiritual kingdom in the church. Today the church is God's spiritual kingdom, God's heavenly kingdom on the earth; a saved one keeps himself by righteousness, treats others with peace, and always rejoices in the Spirit.

THE DEFEAT OF THE CHURCH

However, the church gradually lost its firm stand. Even before the apostles passed away, the church was filled with the works of Satan. Through the flesh, the world, and sin, Satan gained authority once more and usurped God's position. This is clearly seen in the seven epistles in Revelation.

THE CALL FOR OVERCOMERS

When the descendants of Adam failed, God called Abraham. When the church failed, God called the overcomers. The Lord's epistles to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are His call for overcomers. He calls some of His lovers to stand in the proper position of the church to answer His call and to meet His need in this age, thus allowing Him to reign through them.

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE OVERCOMERS

The man-child brought forth by the woman spoken of in Revelation 12:5 and 10 is a group of overcomers in the church who have allowed God to reign in them and who, as a result, bring God's authority to the earth. The kingdom on the earth then becomes the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

Revelation 20:4-6 says that because the overcomers bring in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the Lord will reign for a thousand years, and the overcomers will also reign with Christ for a thousand years.

THE REIGN IN ETERNITY

First Corinthians 15:24 says that at the end of the millennial kingdom, the Lord will receive the kingdom from God and will deliver it up back to God; thus, eternity will begin, and the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem will appear. At this point heaven and earth will be fully joined, without any distinction between reigning in the heavens and reigning on the earth. Now the Lord and the church, including all who belong to God throughout the ages, will rule and reign together forever and ever. This is shown in Revelation 22. Through this kingdom, this reign, God's life will flow and God's building will be completed.

Brothers and sisters, after seeing these matters, we can arrive at one conclusion—both the growth in life and the building up of the church depend upon God's reigning. Whenever the church lacks God's reign, everything is in confusion, and the condition of Babel is manifested. When someone in the church overthrows God's authority, the sound of confusion rises up. However,

when someone in the church allows God to reign, immediately the scene on the day of Pentecost appears—everyone speaks the same thing. Thus, the scene of the New Jerusalem is manifested. The harmonious condition in the church comes out from the throne of God. In the New Jerusalem everyone will be standing in his own place according to the proper order with the proper authority. In this way everyone will be built up together. Therefore, I say again, both life and building depend upon the throne of God.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE LINE OF GOD'S COVENANTS

God's covenants with man is a very special and important line in the Bible. Ever since man was created, God has stood on the ground of a covenant in His dealings with man; these covenants with man are written in the Bible. The Bible, which has sixty-six books, is a record of God's covenants with man. Therefore, the Bible is also referred to as the Old and New Testaments, or the old and new covenants, which shows the importance of God's covenants in the Bible.

It is quite extraordinary that other religious writings are not called a covenant; only the Christian Bible is called a covenant. Other religious writings talk about religious teachings, religious rules, and religious regulations, but only the Bible is a covenant made by God with man. Unlike common religious writings, which center on teachings, rules, and regulations, the Holy Bible is centered on covenants, covering all the covenants that God has made with man.

The words that we normally speak are not considered a covenant, but once words are formalized on a legal basis and bound by law, the words are called a contract or a covenant. For example, when we discuss some matters with others in a casual way, our words are merely words that cannot be regarded as a covenant. However, if we are engaging in important business, we must put our words, the terms and conditions, and all the details into formal writing based on law and restricted by law. Then these words become a contract, a covenant, between us and the other party. A covenant is a set of words that are more than just ordinary words; they are formal words with a legal basis and that are bound by law.

We make contracts because we want to strengthen our credibility. Ordinary words may be unreliable and questionable, but when they are turned into a contract or a covenant, they are more trustworthy. The Chinese word for *contract* or *covenant* also means "binding"; in other words, a contract is something that binds people. Once we put our words into a contract, we are bound by the words, and we must fulfill the terms of the contract.

In the Bible all of God's covenants with man reveal His desire toward man. Every covenant fully discloses what man's position is in relation to God's desire, what God is doing in man, what God expects of man, and even the things that God has done for man. God's desire toward man becomes a covenant because He swears by a solemn oath and explains His desire to man in very formal words. This may be likened to the negotiation between two persons. When two parties negotiate about a certain matter, they do not speak to one another in a common, casual, and light manner. Rather, they speak formally and solemnly in relation to their legal standing so that there is a legal basis and the binding of law. Consequently, they have a responsibility to fulfill what they have spoken. Likewise, God expresses His desire toward man in a covenant as a way to provide a guarantee to man and to establish His credibility so that man would trust in Him and be at peace.

Please remember that the Bible is a book of the revelation of God's desire toward man; it is full of God's words, and these words fully explain God's desire toward man. When God spoke, however, He did not speak with ordinary words but with covenanting words. He spoke with His own immovable faithfulness as the guarantee. These words became covenants under the binding of law, being bound by His faithfulness.

Since the Bible is a book of God's covenants with man, these covenants are a great and central line in the Bible. In order to understand the Bible, we must find the line of these covenants. In this overview there are nine obvious covenants in the Bible, and among these there are two especially great ones, commonly known as the old covenant and the new covenant. Of course, these do not refer to the Old Testament and the New Testament of the Bible but to the two great covenants shown in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is so named because it contains a great covenant, which was a previous covenant that became old and has been abolished. Likewise, the New Testament is so named because it particularly speaks of a new covenant. Although one covenant has passed away, another covenant still exists. The former covenant is considered an old covenant, and the current covenant is considered a new covenant. This is a great subject, but we can only touch upon it briefly.

Of these nine covenants, some are clearly pointed out in the Bible as covenants, but some are not pointed out so clearly. For example, God made a covenant with Noah twice, and the Bible plainly states that God made a

covenant with Noah in both instances. But there are other instances where the covenants are not plainly identified, even though they are God's covenants with man in every aspect. For example, in 2 Samuel 7 the covenant God made with David is not spoken of as a covenant. It was not until long afterward, during the captivity of the children of Israel, when someone wrote Psalm 89, recalling the incident of God's speaking to David in 2 Samuel 7, that it is referred to as a covenant with David. Although it was not plainly called a covenant at the time, it later was recognized as a covenant. The words to David were very formal, based on law and bound by law, so they also were a covenant with man. Now that we have clearly defined this principle, we can find nine instances in the Bible where God spoke to man in such a formal way; in other words, God made nine covenants with man.

THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH MAN

The covenant God made with man is recorded in Genesis 1:28-29. God made man in His own image so that man would represent Him and express His glory on the earth. After God made man, He came and spoke to man. We should realize that the words God spoke were not ordinary words but extremely solemn and formal words. Therefore, the words in these two verses are a covenant that God made with man. Now we will briefly touch the main points of this covenant.

This covenant shows that God's desire is that man would be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. First, we know that the human race has been fruitful and has multiplied and is filling the earth. This is because God has fulfilled the first covenant He made with man. Any attempt to reduce the multiplication of the human race is against this covenant of God.

Second, God wants man to subdue the earth. God gave man authority to rule over the earth. God wanted man to have dominion over the earth, to conquer the earth, and to recover the earth because Satan's intention is to engage in rebellious activities against God on the earth. Almost all of Satan's rebellions against God are concentrated on the earth. This point has also been fulfilled. Today, regardless of how far man has fallen, the earth is still under his ruling.

Third, God wanted man to have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. Not only did God put the earth under man's dominion, He also put all the creatures under man's dominion so that man would be the head of all the creatures in the sea, on the land, and in heaven. In this way man could be God's authority on the earth, reigning for God and expressing God's glory in all these things.

Fourth, God wanted man to take herbs and all kinds of fruit as food. Here God took care of the matter of man's sustenance. All the food for man's sustenance were vegetables, not meat; the food was only from plants, not animals. At this time there was not a problem with sin, so there was no need to kill animals for the shedding of blood for expiation; there was only a need for the sustenance of life.

Fifth, there was no need for man to wear clothes. Man did not have the problem of clothing. Since there was not a problem with sin in the beginning, man did not need a covering, an outward justification.

Sixth, the covenant God made with man was later fulfilled by the Lord Jesus. This covenant was made immediately after man was made, and in this covenant God did not ask man to fulfill any requirement; it only revealed God's desire toward man. But shortly afterward, due to man's fall, man lost his position in this covenant. It is marvelous, however, that God speaks of this covenant again in Psalm 8. God spoke of this covenant because even though the created man failed due to the fall and lost his position in the covenant, God determined that He Himself would come to be the second man. His coming to be the second man was connected with the first man. The second man was the Lord Jesus. His coming to be a man was connected with the first Adam, and in His coming He also assumed the position of the first man. The covenant God made with the first man was inherited by the second man. Therefore, in Psalm 8 God repeats this covenant with man. Hebrews 2 clearly points out to us that the man spoken of in Psalm 8 is not the first man but Christ. Christ is the second man, and the covenant God made with the first man was inherited by the second man. The Bible shows us that the first covenant God made with man eventually was applied to the Lord Jesus and was completely fulfilled in Him. In the end the Lord Jesus has become the Head of creation to rule over the earth as God's authority for the expression of His glory.

THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH THE FALLEN MAN

The previous covenant was a covenant God made with man; at that time Adam had not fallen. After Adam fell, God came and made a second covenant with him. At the time of Genesis 3:8-21 man was deceived by Satan and followed him. Adam was unrighteous toward God and fearful of Him, so he turned from the presence of God and hid himself in a secret place, afraid to see God. In these circumstances God came to seek him, and once He found him, God made a covenant with man.

Even though this biblical record contains only a few words, God's speaking was very solemn and formal. The words He spoke were guaranteed by God's faithfulness; therefore, they should be considered as the words of a covenant with man. We will consider the main points.

God Cursing the Serpent (Representing Satan)

The Serpent Creeping on His Belly

The spiritual significance of this word is that Satan's move is limited to the earth. Satan brought God's curse upon himself because of his deception of man, and so the sphere of his activity is limited to the earth. Satan's activity in the universe cannot go beyond the earth.

The Serpent Eating Dust All the Days of His Life

The spiritual meaning of this word is that Satan's food is the man who has been made of dust. Whenever man lives by the created life, he is earthy and is Satan's food. If man lives by the divine life, however, he avoids being devoured by Satan.

God Putting Enmity between the Serpent and the Woman

The principle in the Bible is to use a proper woman as a figure of those who belong to God. The enmity between the serpent and the woman denotes the enmity between Satan and all who belong to God. According to this covenant, whenever we stand on God's side, we will surely encounter the enmity of Satan.

God Putting Enmity between the Seed of the Serpent and the Seed of the Woman

The seed of the serpent is a particular expression. If the serpent spoken of here referred only to one serpent, God would not have spoken of "the seed of the serpent." Since God spoke of "the seed of the serpent," the serpent here refers not only to a serpent but also to Satan, symbolized by the serpent. The seed of the serpent refers also to those who belong to Satan.

Ever since God spoke this word, there have been two seeds among the descendants of Adam. One is the seed of the serpent, and the other one is the seed of the woman. Cain and his descendants were the seed of the serpent and belonged to Satan, whereas people such as Abel were the seed of the woman and belonged to God. The ultimate or the most faithful seed of the woman is our Lord Jesus. At His birth, according to the flesh, He was the seed of the woman; spiritually, He is also the seed of the woman. He was truly born of a woman, and He stands on God's side as well. All who belong to Satan are at enmity with Him.

Beginning from Abel all those who have been on God's side throughout the generations are the seed of the woman, just as all who have been against God are the seed of Satan. These two seeds are at enmity with each other, and this enmity began in Genesis 4.

The Seed of the Woman Bruising the Serpent on the Head, and the Serpent Bruising the Seed of the Woman on the Heel

The seed of the woman will deal a deathblow to Satan through suffering. Serpents are most vulnerable to a blow on the head; if one receives a blow on

the head, it receives a fatal injury. In bruising the head of the serpent, the seed of the woman would also be bruised on the heel by the serpent. This figurative expression refers to the Lord Jesus coming as the seed of the woman and through His death on the cross destroying the devil who has the might of death, thereby bruising the serpent on the head. When He went to the cross to bruise the devil in this way, He was also bruised by Satan on the cross. However, the bruise that Satan inflicted on Him was not a fatal wound but only a suffering. Although His suffering was very great, it could not destroy His life. This covenant symbolically tells us that God determined that the Lord Jesus would become a man for the purpose of destroying Satan through death.

God Ordaining Woman to Suffer Pain in Childbearing

To this day the pain of childbearing has not been removed from women. However, 1 Timothy 2:15 does indicate that childbearing can be a salvation to women if they remain in holiness with sobriety, keeping their place before God and living a godly life. God's arrangement for women to suffer in childbearing is a salvation to them. It does not benefit human beings, who have a sinful nature, to be too comfortable; this causes them to fall deeper into sin. Therefore, God uses sufferings to restrict human beings from committing many sins. Suffering is a cure and a salvation.

God Ordaining Woman to Be Ruled Over by Man

The trend in modern society stresses the equality of man and woman. You may think that I am merely a brother who is advocating the superiority of men and the inferiority of women so that men can rule over women. Honestly, I really wish that I were a sister. We need to see that this position is according to the order arranged by God between the male and the female after the fall of man. The New Testament also says that the man is the head and that the woman should cover her head (1 Cor. 11:3-5), which is according to the order in God's creation because Adam was created first and Eve second. Therefore, in God's ordained order in His creation and in His order after man's fall, it is not possible for both man and woman to be first or even for both to be second;

one must be first and the other second. Strictly speaking, there is not equality between man and woman.

I believed in the Lord before I was twenty. At one time I read an essay in a newspaper analyzing the equality of man and woman. It said that even in France, a country that very much values equality, a married woman still has to take the last name of her husband. If the man and the woman are equal, why would a woman take the last name of the man? How about a man taking the last name of a woman? It made another point by saying that while taking the last name of the man does not show equality, neither would taking the last name of the woman. There would be equality only if the two names are combined. But as it was analyzed further, it raised the question of whether the man's last name should precede the woman's or whether the woman's last name should precede the man's. There would not be equality either way. After all the analysis it came to the conclusion that there would always be one who is first and one who is second. This is God's ordained principle, and it cannot be overturned.

Brothers and sisters, according to the order of creation, men should be first and women second, and according to the sequence of the fall, women even more should be ruled over by men because the first one to be deceived was Eve, not Adam (1 Tim. 2:14). In creation Eve was second, but in committing sin, Eve was first; therefore, God said that the woman would be ruled by the man. This is God's ordination.

The Ground Being Cursed because of Man's Fall

The earth was under man's rule, and man was the head and representative of the earth. Therefore, after man sinned, the ground was involved and suffered God's curse (Gen. 3:17). The thorns and thistles that the ground brings forth are the sign of being cursed, signifying that all creation under man and ruled by man is cursed because of his sin. Romans 8 says that all creation is under the slavery of corruption, groaning and travailing in pain (vv. 21-22), not of its own choice; it was implicated by Adam because Adam was its representative.

God Determining That Man Would Toil

God determined that man would suffer in toil and labor, eating bread only by the sweat of his face. Today all those who desire comfort, who desire to live an easy life, and who desire to have food without labor are against God's principle. Regardless of whether we are a man or a woman, we all need some hardship for our salvation and protection. Man should labor day and night; ease involves danger.

Please forgive me for saying this: Some countries in the West put great emphasis on comfort and ease. They work five days a week and eight hours per day at most. Some even demand to work only six hours per day. The rest of the time they seek as much entertainment as possible and commit many sins as a result. The weekend is a time for them to greatly indulge in their lusts. The first day of the week should be the day for people to worship God in His presence, yet it has become the time for people to engage in entertainment and sins. From God's perspective man should not be at ease, because sinful mankind with his sinful nature must toil to be saved from many sins. God has ordained that man should suffer in labor; this is for his salvation.

God Ordaining That Man Would Die

The length of man's life is limited—just as he came from dust, he will return to dust (Gen. 3:19).

God Making Coats of Skin and Clothing Man

In His creation God did not make coats of skin to clothe man. When skins were needed, there was a slaughter and the shedding of the blood of an animal. This must have been a sheepskin, not a thick cowhide. There must have been a lamb that died and bled for man. When man sinned, he felt ashamed and sewed fig leaves together to make a loincloth to cover his body, but the loincloth could not cover him. After God made coats of skin to cover him, man could stand before God and not see his own shamefulness.

In this covenant God determined that a substitute had to die and shed its blood for man. This became man's righteousness before God so that he could be accepted by God. The coat of skin signifies the Lord Jesus as our righteousness for us to put on so that we can stand before God, be accepted by

God, and be justified by God. We can put on the Lord Jesus as our righteousness because He has become the Lamb of God; He died for us on the cross, shed His blood, and redeemed us from our sins. Therefore, this covenant also details how God accomplishes redemption. He became the seed of the woman and the Lamb who was slain to deal with our enemy, Satan, and to solve our problem before God. This covenant concerns the living and righteous solution for sinful people who have the sinful nature.

The Lord Jesus has a particular position in this covenant. The center of this covenant is the seed of the woman, and the seed of the woman comprises all who belong to God with the Lord Jesus, who was born of the virgin Mary, as the central figure. Both physically and spiritually, the Lord Jesus is the seed of the woman. He was born of a woman, and He bruised Satan's head through His death on the cross. By shedding His blood, He solved the problem of our sins, and He has become our righteousness for us to put on before God so that we may be accepted by God.

THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH NOAH, WHOM HE INTENDED TO SAVE

Genesis 6:18—7:5 gives a record of the covenant God made with Noah when He was about to destroy mankind with a flood. First, when God decided to destroy mankind with the flood, He charged Noah and his family of eight to enter into the ark in order to preserve their lives. God wanted to destroy all the earth and preserve Noah and his family, but they had to enter into the ark. Second, God told Noah to bring some of every living thing into the ark to be kept alive. Third, God told Noah also to bring some of every kind of food into the ark to sustain them for a period of time. Fourth, once they did this, God was able to preserve their lives and the lives of the living things that were with them when He flooded the earth. This is the covenant God made with Noah and all living things. It was possible for man and every living thing to continue to propagate because of this covenant.

THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH NOAH AFTER HIS SALVATION

After Noah was saved through the ark, God made another covenant with him, which is recorded in Genesis 8:20—9:17.

First, this covenant was based on the shedding of the blood of burnt offerings. After Noah came out of the ark, he took of every clean animal and offered burnt offerings to God. When God smelled the fragrance, He was satisfied and made a covenant with Noah.

Second, the particular sign of this covenant was a rainbow. When it rains and a rainbow appears, we know that the sky will soon clear up because the sign of this covenant is the rainbow. Even in Revelation 4 there is still a rainbow around God as a sign, indicating that the universe exists today because God has kept this covenant with His might.

Third, God promised not to curse the ground again. God did not say that He would remove the curse from the ground but that He would not add to the curse on the ground.

Fourth, God promised that mankind and every living thing would never again be destroyed. Even though Noah and his family were saved and came out of the ark, they probably could not have slept very peacefully at night without such a covenant. They would have been concerned that if they did something wrong they might provoke God into sending another flood. So God made a covenant with Noah, guaranteeing that the earth would not be cursed again and that mankind and all living things would not be destroyed again by a flood. Whenever there is a heavy rain and a rainbow suddenly appears, we know that we are safe. This is a sign of God's covenant.

Fifth, God promised that all the seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night would maintain their cycles without ceasing (Gen. 8:22). God guaranteed that the order in the universe would be properly maintained unceasingly. This covenant ensures the existence of the universe and the growth of every living thing. If the earth were a little closer to the sun, all living things on earth would be burned to death; if the earth were a little farther from the sun, the earth would become a great freezer, and everything would freeze to death. The temperature on the earth today is so suitable because of this covenant.

Sixth, God reiterated that man should be fruitful and multiply. He still wanted man to be fruitful and multiply on the earth as Adam had done before the fall.

Seventh, God again gave man authority to rule over every creature in heaven, on the land, and in the sea. In this covenant God still ordained man as the head over all things.

Eighth, God ordained that the food for man's living would no longer be limited to plants but would also include animals, and also that man could eat meat, because man needed to be redeemed. Man cannot live before God if he eats only vegetables; he must eat meat. Eating vegetables means that man relies only on his own works; eating meat means that man relies on the shedding of blood for his redemption. In order to live before God, man must eat meat; there must be the killing of the animal and the shedding of its blood.

Ninth, God gave man the authority to rule over others. God said, "Whoever sheds man's blood, / By man shall his blood be shed" (9:6). This means that people would have authority to rule over and punish lawless, murderous persons. From this time forth, God gave man authority to rule over others. Some Bible readers say that another age—the age of human government—began at this point because man had the authority to rule over others.

Tenth, God ordained that Noah's three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—would become the ancestors of the three races of humankind on the earth. Shem, in particular, had a relationship with Jehovah God, because God was called Jehovah, the God of Shem (v. 26). Shem would become the people of central Asia; Abraham and the children of Israel were all descendants of Shem, the people of God. Second, Ham's son would be a servant of servants (v. 25). The descendants of Ham particularly refer to the people in the region of Africa. Third, Japheth would be enlarged and dwell in the tents of Shem (v. 27). Japheth was the forefather of the Europeans; his descendants were especially prosperous. The Caucasian people have been enlarged and have spread everywhere because this is God's ordination.

This is the covenant God made with man after the flood destroyed the world and Noah came out of the ark to live a new life in a new land. In this covenant God made arrangements concerning the order of the universe, the position of man on the earth, and the living that man should have before Him. To this day these regulations remain and continue to operate.

In this covenant the Lord Jesus also has a particular position. The burnt offerings signify the Lord Jesus. God was able to enact this covenant with the new human race because in His eyes He saw His Son Christ as the burnt offering. This made it possible for God to accept man and to keep the universe in which man exists. To this day order in the universe is kept, seeds and plants grow, man continues to live on the earth, and the natural laws on the earth are maintained because the Lord Jesus shed His blood before God as a burnt offering for our acceptance by God.

THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH ABRAHAM, THE CALLED ONE

All the words spoken in the following portions of the Word are the content of the covenant God made with Abraham, the called one: Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 21:12; and 22:16-18. This is an orthodox covenant, a covenant of grace; it is joined to the new covenant, and it is the basis of the new covenant. This covenant can be explained in seven points.

God Ordaining That Abraham Would Become a Great Nation

God wanted to gain the kingdom, a great nation, through Abraham. This kingdom, this great nation, is the nation of Israel in the Old Testament age, the church in the New Testament age, the millennial kingdom in the coming age, and the new heaven and the new earth in eternity. In other words, the past nation of Israel, the present church, the future millennial kingdom, and the new heaven and the new earth in eternity are all components of God's kingdom, which God wanted to gain through Abraham.

God Promising That Abraham Would Receive the Blessing

This blessing includes the blessing of God's creation and the blessing of God's redemption. God's creation is for created man, and God's redemption is for fallen man. There are blessings in both God's creation and redemption, and God wanted to give every blessing to Abraham. The content of this blessing includes every blessing that God wants to give to man. It includes God Himself and everything that belongs to Him; it includes everything

heavenly and earthly; and it also includes everything in this age and in the next. We need to understand *nation* as something great, and we need to understand *blessing* also as something great.

A nation is a matter of dominion, and a blessing is a matter of life. We are able to enjoy the blessings of God's creation and redemption because God has given us His Spirit so that we may have His life. Galatians 3 says that the blessing God gave to Abraham has come to us through the Lord Jesus by believing in Him. As the Spirit, the Lord Jesus came into man to be man's life and to enable man to receive every blessing that belongs to God in the heavens, on the earth, in this age, and in the next age, including God Himself.

While the center of these blessings is God as life, the ultimate result for those who receive this blessing is that they will have the image of God. A nation is a matter of dominion, and a blessing is a matter of image. Therefore, both nation and blessing are related to image and dominion, which is spoken of at the beginning of Genesis.

God Promising That All the Families of the Earth Would Be Blessed through the Seed of Abraham

According to Galatians 3:16, the seed refers to Christ Himself. Through Christ, God blesses all the families of the earth. In other words, God wants all the people on the earth, through Christ, to have the opportunity to receive His life and enter into His kingdom, that is, to express His image and to be under His ruling.

The above three items are the gospel. Galatians 3:8 says that the gospel we hear today was preached to Abraham in Genesis 12.

God Promising Abraham That He Would Bless Those Who Blessed Abraham and His Seed and Curse Those Who Cursed Abraham and His Seed

God has always kept this promise. None who have mistreated the Jews have had a good ending; the same is true for those who mistreat the church. The Jews are the earthly descendants of Abraham, while the church is the

heavenly descendant of Abraham. During World War II Hitler treated the Jews cruelly, and we know of how his life ended. Today countries in the communist world are very unfriendly toward the Israelis, and they are also doing their best to persecute the church, so we can conclude that their ending will be met with God's curse. This is because God said that He would bless those who bless His people and curse those who curse His people.

God Promising the Land of Canaan to Abraham and His Seed

Galatians 3:16 says that this covenant is focused on the Lord Jesus Himself. When the Lord Jesus comes again, this promise will be utterly fulfilled. At that time He will officially inherit the land of Canaan, using the land of Canaan as the center of His administration to rule over the whole world.

God Promising Abraham's Seed to Be Like the Sand on the Seashore and the Stars of the Heavens

Of the two seeds God promised to Abraham, one is earthly, and the other is heavenly. All those who are saved are Abraham's descendants through faith; they are as numerous as the stars of the heavens and are heavenly. All those who are Abraham's descendants in the flesh are his earthly descendants; they are as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

Circumcision Being the Sign of the Covenant

The sign of God's covenant with Noah was a rainbow; the sign of God's covenant with Abraham is circumcision. The focus of circumcision is not on an outward ritual but on its inward spiritual significance. This spiritual significance involves the cutting off of the flesh. In order for the blessings of this covenant to come to the people of God, they need to deal with the flesh of the old creation, putting to death the life of the old creation.

The Lord Jesus occupies a particular place in this covenant. The Lord Jesus is the seed God promised to Abraham; He is the One in whom all the families of the earth are blessed and the One who received the inheritance God promised to Abraham.

This same covenant was spoken of by God to Isaac in Genesis 26:2-6 and to Jacob in 28:13-15. This shows that God desired to extend this covenant to the descendants of Abraham.

THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AT MOUNT SINAI

The record of this covenant is quite long; it is found in Exodus 19 through Leviticus 27, Deuteronomy 5:1-4, and Hebrews 9:1-7. On the one hand, *Old Testament* commonly refers to the Old Testament portion of the Holy Bible, but on the other hand, it also refers to the old covenant God made with the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. This covenant is not a covenant in the orthodox line; it was inserted on the way. The orthodox covenant began with Abraham. The covenants before Abraham were also included in the orthodox line because the covenants God made with man were in a continuous line. Every covenant made along this line has been necessary with the only exception being the covenant made at Mount Sinai. This covenant entered alongside and is not related to the orthodox covenants (Rom. 5:20). There are too many items in this covenant; therefore, we can look at only two aspects of it in a general way.

The Law

In this covenant the first aspect is the law. The Ten Commandments are the general principles of the law. We usually consider the Ten Commandments as being representative of the law; when we refer to the Ten Commandments, we are speaking about the law. The Ten Commandments, however, are not the entire law. Beginning in Exodus 21 many statutes and ordinances concerning the details in the living of God's people are also included in the law.

Romans 10:5 says, "The man who does them shall live by them." Galatians 3:10 says, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all the things written in the book of the law to do them." With respect to the law, there is righteousness but no grace. In principle, the law requires man to do God's commandments by himself.

The Ordinances

In this covenant there are also many ordinances, all of which are related to ritualistic matters, not to moral matters. The law, which is moral in nature, concerns the Ten Commandments, statutes, and regulations; the ordinances, which are ritualistic in nature, concern the tabernacle, the priests, and the offerings.

If we study this covenant through the entire Bible, we will realize that God intended to use the law to prove man's weakness and impotence, to prove that man could not be justified by God through his own works, and thus, to cause man to fall to the ground. Furthermore, God prepared the ordinances so that through the tabernacle, the priests, and the offerings man could still live in His presence, draw near to Him, and have fellowship with Him. According to the law, man cannot draw near to God and live in His presence; instead, man deserves only to be cursed, to fall, and to die before God. However, according to the ordinances, man can approach God, fellowship with Him, be accepted by Him, and live in His presence through the tabernacle, the priests, and the offerings. Both aspects of this covenant are absolute. According to the law, man absolutely cannot live in God's presence; but according to the ordinances, man absolutely can live in His presence through the tabernacle, the priests, and the offerings. The tabernacle, the priests, and the offerings all refer to Christ. According to the law, we cannot live in God's presence; however, in Christ (that is, in the tabernacle), by Christ (that is, by the priests), and through Christ (that is, through the offerings) we can approach God and live in His presence. Therefore, the Lord Jesus has a very particular position in this covenant.

The relationship between the Lord Jesus and the law can be explained in the following five points. First, according to Galatians 4:4, the Lord Jesus was born under the law. Second, the Lord Jesus fully kept the law. From His birth all the way to His death, He lived His human life on the earth fully according to the law in matters both great and small. He was circumcised on the eighth day of His birth, presented to God according to the law, and brought to the temple for the keeping of the feasts. He fully kept every moral regulation in the law. This is clearly seen throughout the Gospels. Third, according to Galatians 3:10-13, the Lord Jesus bore the curse of the law on our behalf. No one has fully borne the curse of the law like the Lord Jesus. The curse of the law fell on the Lord Jesus because He bore our sins and stood in our place, not because He had any sin. Fourth, according to Galatians 4:5, He redeemed us from under the law. Fifth, according to Matthew 5:17, He fulfilled the law.

The Lord Jesus did not break the law nor abolish the law; rather, He fulfilled the law by keeping the law Himself, being cursed on our behalf, and redeeming us from under the law. Therefore, in this covenant the Lord Jesus has a particular position with respect to this aspect of the law.

According to the aspect of the ordinances, the reality of every ordinance is the Lord Himself. The tabernacle, including every part of the tabernacle, denotes the Lord Himself; the priests, including the garments, breastplate, and shoulder pieces worn by the priests and all the other items, denote the Lord Himself. All the offerings, including the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, and all the other offerings, also denote the Lord Himself. We must have this realization when we read the ordinances.

In this covenant, in the aspect of the law, the Lord Jesus has fulfilled for us what we never could keep in ourselves. In the aspect of the ordinances, He has become the very means by which we approach God.

THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL IN THE LAND OF MOAB

After the children of Israel came out of Egypt to the foot of Mount Sinai, God made a covenant with them. This is the old covenant. When the journey of the children of Israel in the wilderness came to an end, God made another covenant with them in the land of Moab before they entered Canaan. This is recorded in Deuteronomy 28 through 30. Deuteronomy 29:1 explicitly says that this covenant was not included in the covenant enacted at Mount Horeb, which is Mount Sinai; it was a covenant alongside of the covenant that He made with them at Mount Horeb. This covenant can be summed up in three points.

First, God said that the children of Israel would be blessed if they did according to God's law. They would be blessed in their coming in, and they would be blessed in their going out. They would be blessed in their eating, and they would be blessed in their clothing. They would be blessed in their dwellings, and they would be blessed in their journeys. They would be blessed in the city, and they would be blessed outside the city. They would be blessed

everywhere and in everything, and they would be able to overcome all enemies and dwell peacefully in the good land, Canaan, which God promised to their fathers.

Second, God said that they would be cursed if they disobeyed His law, forsook Him, and followed the customs of the nations, going after their idols. They would be cursed in their coming in, and they would be cursed in their going out. They would be cursed everywhere and in everything, and they would be overcome by their enemies and carried away to all the nations.

Third, He said that if they would repent and turn back to Him after they had been carried away to the nations, He would gather them and bring them back from the nations, causing them to multiply in number, and bless them.

This covenant is not related to us; it altogether concerns whether or not the Israelites would live peacefully in the land of Canaan.

THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH DAVID, THE ANOINTED

This covenant, recorded in 2 Samuel 7:5-16 and Psalm 89:19-37, is an orthodox covenant and is included in the covenant God made with Abraham. This covenant is a supplement to Abraham's covenant, particularly in the kingdom aspect. We will look at four points.

God Promising to Make a House for David

God's promise to make a house for David relates to David having a seed. There is a background for this covenant that God made with David. At first David wanted to build a house for God. After he was king, having conquered most of the enemies around the borders, David built a palace in which to dwell. However, he did not feel peaceful inwardly because even though he had settled down, the Ark of God, which is God Himself, did not have a dwelling place. Therefore, he wanted to build a temple for God, to build a house for God. His desire pleased God, but God would not let him do so because God first needed to make a house for David so that David could then build a house for God. God did not want David to act before Him. David also frequently went to war, shed blood abundantly, and some of his enemies were not yet conquered. Therefore, God seemed to be saying, "You are a man of war and

are not fit for building My house. After I have built a house for you and you have begotten a seed from that house, that seed will build Me a house."

God Promising to Establish an Eternal Kingdom for David

Not only did God make David a house, He also promised to enlarge this house into a kingdom that would be an eternal kingdom, which would extend all the way to the Lord Jesus.

God Promising to Establish the Throne and the Kingship of the Seed of David

God promised David that He would never take the throne of the kingdom away from his seed; He would keep this throne and the kingship for the seed of David forever. We know that this throne and kingship extended all the way to the Lord Jesus. The beginning of the Gospel of Luke tells us that the One who was both God and man, who was born of Mary, would inherit the throne and the kingship of David because the Lord Jesus was the seed of David.

God Promising That a Seed among David's Descendants Would Build the House of God, the Temple of God

This covenant has four items: the house, the kingdom, the throne, and the temple. The kingdom is for God's reign, the temple is for God's presence, and the house is for the mingling of God and man. From this house a man is born, who is the seed of David. He sits on the throne, reigning for God and bringing in God's presence.

In this covenant the Lord Jesus has a very particular position. Every point of this covenant refers to the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the real seed of David; He is the Son of David. He is the true Solomon. He is the One who is the mingling of God and man; He is Emmanuel brought forth through God's entering into man and becoming flesh (Matt. 1:23). He inherited the throne of David His father. He brought in the kingdom of God and reigned for God; and He built the temple of God so that God could be with man and dwell with man.

These points are clearly spoken of in the following Scriptures: Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-16; Luke 1:31-33; and Acts 2:29-36.

THE NEW COVENANT GOD MADE WITH US

The ultimate, highest, greatest, and most beautiful covenant in the Bible is what we commonly refer to as the new covenant. The Lord Jesus came and accomplished redemption for us, and based on this, God made the new covenant with us.

The Bible speaks of this covenant in many places. In Matthew 26:27-28, when the Lord Jesus established His table, He said that it was a new covenant established in His blood. First Corinthians 11:25 says the same thing. Hebrews 8:6-13 says that God consummated a new covenant with His people. Hebrews 7:22 says that this covenant is a better covenant. Hebrews 13:20 says that this covenant is an eternal covenant.

This Covenant Being Established in the Lord's Blood

The Lord Jesus shed His blood for redemption on the cross, and in this blood He established a new covenant with God.

The Lord Jesus Being the Mediator of This Covenant

The establishment of the new covenant is based not only on the blood of the Lord Jesus; the Lord Jesus Himself is the Mediator of this covenant. To be a mediator means that one bears the responsibility of both parties; as the Mediator, Christ bears responsibility on God's side and on man's side. In other words, as the Mediator, He is the One who executes the covenant to make it a reality. The Lord Jesus established this new covenant in His own blood, and He also executes this covenant through His incorruptible life.

God Putting the Law of Life within Man

The law of the old covenant was outward and in letter; it was engraved on tablets of stone and kept by man's strength. The law of the new covenant is inward and in life; it is inscribed on the tablets of man's heart and kept by

man from within through its spontaneous power. The center of the new covenant is the law of life.

Man Being Able to Spontaneously Know God

Since God has put the law of life within man, man has the capability to spontaneously know God. This knowing is not related to the teaching of knowledge; it comes out of the sense of life. Consequently, anyone who has a part in this covenant, from the little one to the great one, has no need for anyone to teach him. Instead, he is able to know God by himself.

For example, even though a newborn infant does not know what is bitter and what is sweet, he will spew out anything that is bitter. But he will quickly eat some honey when it is fed to him. Although he has no knowledge of bitter and sweet in his brain, the knowledge of life within causes him to spew out the bitter and eat the sweet. Today everyone who has been saved has the life of God, and this life within is a law with a natural capacity for us to know God. This is a particular characteristic of the new covenant.

God Promising to Take Away All Our Iniquities and to Remember Our Sins No More

The prophecy in Jeremiah 31 is the covenant God made with the Israelites and is concerning the time in the future after they have been restored and saved by God. God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and made the old covenant with them at Mount Sinai. In the coming millennial kingdom, God will call them out of all the nations again, and at that time God will enact this new covenant with them. Thank God that He has applied this covenant in advance to us, the believers, because the Lord Jesus shed the blood of the covenant, resurrected from the dead, and became the Executor of this covenant in the resurrection life. God has given us a foretaste of the blessing of the new covenant because of the Lord Jesus and His redemption.

Hence, according to God's ordination, the time of the new covenant has not yet fully arrived; the new covenant still involves something related to the future, but based on the fact that the Lord Jesus shed His blood, was

resurrected, and now dwells in us in life, God can apply the function of the new covenant to us who believe so that we may have a foretaste of the blessing of the new covenant. In the future the Israelites will all participate in the blessing of the new covenant; this is revealed in Jeremiah 31 and Romans 11:25-27.

These nine covenants are a history of the dealings between God and man. All the dealings between God and man are included in these nine covenants. The first divine name Elohim means “a strong and powerful One who binds Himself with an oath.” This includes God covenanting with man by His faithfulness after He created all things and human beings with His might. God is a God who keeps His word and abides by His covenants. We will briefly go over all the covenants again, from the first to the ninth.

Immediately after God created man, He came and made the first covenant with man, wanting man to be fruitful and multiply and to have dominion over all the creatures of the sea, the land, and in heaven. He ordained that man would be sustained by the plant life. God came in to make a second covenant because man fell.

In the second covenant God promised man that a seed of the woman would come and deal with the enemy who had damaged him; at the same time, He ordained that Satan, who had damaged man, would be forever at enmity with the woman and the seed of the woman. God also ordained that the woman with such a fallen and sinful nature would suffer pain in childbearing and that man would toil in labor. He also ordained a proper order for the man and the woman after the fall. In this covenant He showed forth the salvation that He would accomplish for man; that is, He clothed man with the skin of a sacrifice to cover his shame. Therefore, even though man fell, he still had a standing before God in this covenant. On the one hand, man could be justified and stand before God through the substitution of the sacrifice, and on the other hand, he could overcome the enemy through the coming of the seed of the woman. Man also needed to learn to accept the sufferings arranged by God for his salvation, keeping his place to live on the earth. In this covenant God also ordained that man would suffer physical death. From that time until today, this covenant has not changed.

When man became filled with evil and violence, God wanted to destroy the earth. But He set apart a group of people from among those He intended to

destroy and made a third covenant. God commanded them to enter into the ark and to bring some of the living things with them to preserve their lives. After the flood was over, Noah and his family came out of the ark and offered sacrifices to God on the new land. When God smelled the satisfying fragrance, He immediately made another covenant with the new human race. In this covenant and because of the fragrance of the offerings, God promised that He would keep order in the universe as is fitting for the existence of human beings and all other living things. God also promised to never again destroy the earth with a flood, giving them a rainbow as a sign. In this covenant God also ordained three ancestors of the new human race, who were divided into three races. Finally, in this covenant God restated that man should be fruitful and multiply and rule over everything.

However, these people soon fell into a rebellious condition and began to build a tower in Babel whose top was to reach the heavens, thus declaring their rebellion against God. Therefore, God judged them. After the judgment, God believed that the created race had fallen beyond hope, and He initiated a new beginning by calling out Abraham, the father of the called race.

God made an extraordinarily great covenant with Abraham, which is called the covenant of promise or the covenant of grace. This covenant is full of God's promise; everything in this covenant is grace. This covenant contains the kingdom and the blessings. We can participate in all of God's blessings only if we receive the life of God. The blessings of God's creation, the blessings of His redemption, the blessings in heaven, the blessings on earth, the blessings of this age, and the blessings of the next age, everything of God Himself and everything outside of God that can be counted as blessings, all have come to us. The kingdom is a matter of authority, and blessings are a matter of life. The kingdom is for God's reigning, while the blessings are for God's expression. Moreover, the kingdom and the blessings, through the seed of Abraham, will extend to all the nations so that all people will be blessed. This is the covenant God made with Abraham.

In addition, God also promised Abraham countless descendants—the descendants of faith are heavenly and are as numerous as the stars in the heavens, and the descendants in the flesh are earthly and are as numerous as the sand on the seashore. God also promised Abraham and his seed a land, the land of Canaan, that they might dwell in it and that He would establish

His throne among them, gain His dwelling place, exercise His authority, and express Himself.

God made this covenant with Abraham, and God restated this covenant with Isaac and Jacob. God also extended this covenant to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God desired that their descendants would become the seed promised in this covenant to inherit the land of Canaan and become a nation, having the temple of God and the throne of God, so that on the one hand, they would be full of God's presence, and on the other hand, they would have the ruling of God. This is God's intention.

However, they fell into Egypt. By His grace God delivered them out of Egypt. God's giving of the passover was grace; God's use of His mighty hand to bring them out of Egypt was grace; God's bringing them to the wilderness, as an eagle bearing its young, was grace. God hoped that they would know themselves and know grace, but they did not know themselves. They proudly said to God that they would listen to Him and keep His words, that is, that they would do all the words which God had spoken. Because they did not know themselves, God was forced to insert a covenant, the covenant of law.

When God made this covenant with the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, His attitude was altogether different. When God spoke to them previously, He was like an eagle bearing its young and a loving mother talking to her child. However, because they did not know themselves, the scene at Mount Sinai changed completely; thunder and lightning were present. It was altogether solemn, holy, and righteous. The solemnity was so dreadful that the Israelites trembled and said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak with us, so we do not die" (Exo. 20:19).

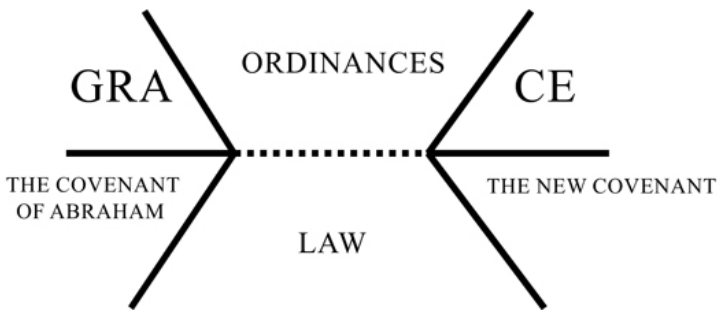
In this kind of condition God decreed the law. The law includes the Ten Commandments and various statutes and ordinances. While the Ten Commandments were being written on the mountain, the children of Israel were violating all of them down at the foot of Mount Sinai. When Moses came down with the Ten Commandments and saw the condition of the transgression of the children of Israel, he burned with anger and threw the tablets, shattering them. This signified that the law had been utterly and completely broken by the Israelites.

But thank God, He did not just decree the law, He also included some ordinances. God knew that the children of Israel could not live in His presence if they only had the law; so, along with the law, He also gave them the ordinances and instructed Moses to build a tabernacle, prepare priests, and prepare offerings because only through these could the children of Israel approach Him. Even before they broke the law, God prepared the ordinances pertaining to the tabernacle, the priests, and the offerings on Mount Sinai. So even though the children of Israel worshipped the golden calf, God allowed them to live on account of the offerings. He also gave them the law again so that they would live under the old covenant.

On the one hand, the children of Israel were Abraham's sons of promise according to the covenant God made with Abraham; on the other hand, they lived under the old covenant that entered alongside because they did not know themselves. These two covenants were separated by four hundred and thirty years. Whereas the earlier covenant was altogether according to grace, the covenant that entered alongside was altogether according to law. On the one hand, they were people of promise under grace; on the other hand, they foolishly put themselves under the law because they did not know themselves. Today we are also like this at times. According to God's ordination, He wants us to live under grace, but because we do not know ourselves, we foolishly put ourselves under the law.

However, when man is tested, he can only fail under the law. Due to the weakness of man's flesh the law cannot accomplish anything except to condemn man, manifest man's impotence, and bring man to the point of needing grace in Christ. Even though it may have seemed that grace was cut off after a period of four hundred and thirty years, God's promise of grace was not abolished by this covenant, which came alongside four hundred and thirty years later; the covenant of grace was still in effect. The diagram below illustrates this matter.

At the foot of Mount Sinai the children of Israel seemingly came under the law, but in reality they were still under grace; God prepared the ordinances for them, which are in the



principle of grace. They had the temple, the priests, and the offerings in their midst. David was a godly man, a man of God, but he committed murder and took another man's wife, committing a great sin; he utterly broke the law. According to the law, he could not live before God. However, Psalm 51 shows us that he could approach God through the offerings, the temple, and the priests of God. Even though the Israelites were under the law, they still lived in the promise of grace; they were still connected to grace.

God then made a covenant with David, His anointed, to build him a house, produce a kingdom from this house, and bring forth a seed out of this house who would build a temple for God to bring in God's presence and who would reign for God. This strengthens the aspect of the kingdom in the promise of grace that God made to Abraham.

This covenant and the preceding covenant it supplemented extend all the way to the new covenant. All the main points in Abraham's covenant and David's covenant were fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus came and shed His blood as the price to meet the requirements of the old covenant, and He resurrected from the dead to carry out the new covenant in us by the power of His resurrection life. Now He is executing this covenant so that we can be before God, have God's life, receive every blessing that God has given us, become God's kingdom, be built into the dwelling place of God in this ruling realm, and have God's presence.

When these conditions are brought together and extended, the ultimate result will be the manifestation of the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem includes all these things. It includes the house, the kingdom, the temple, the throne of authority, God's presence, God's life, the heavenly and earthly blessings, and many other kinds of blessings. At that time God will fulfill everything according to the covenants He made in His dealings with man throughout the ages and dwell with man eternally.

Finally, there are a few points Bible readers should know concerning the covenants. In God's covenants a great part of them involve promises. For example, in the first covenant He promised that man would be fruitful and multiply; in the second covenant He promised the seed of the woman; in Abraham's covenant He promised many descendants.

However, the covenants do not merely contain promises; they also contain facts. For instance, in the new covenant, God said that He would forgive our sins and take away our unrighteousnesses; this is not a promise but an accomplished fact. Today our sins are forgiven not because God promised to forgive us but because He has forgiven us already. To be saved is to accept the fact of being forgiven. In the new covenant the taking away of man's sins is not a promise but a fact. Long ago the Lord Jesus accomplished the taking away of man's sins; therefore, God put this fact into the new covenant to assure man that he only needs to accept what has been accomplished already.

In Greek *covenant* and *testament* are the same word. The new covenant that God made with us is a covenant and a testament. Hebrews 9:15 speaks of the Lord Jesus being the Mediator of the new covenant, and verse 16 also speaks of the Lord being the One who made the testament. Here, *covenant* and *testament* are the same word in Greek. What is a covenant, and what is a testament? The emphasis of *covenant* is on promises, and the emphasis of *testament* is on facts. The covenant was established with us by God, and the testament was accomplished for us by the Lord Jesus. Furthermore, as far as a covenant is concerned, promises are adequate; no facts are necessary. But a testament must have facts. So from the perspective of the testament, the Lord Jesus had to die. If the Lord Jesus had not died, none of the facts would have been accomplished; they would merely be promises in a covenant. But thank the Lord that He died for us and resurrected and ascended. He is now seated on the throne and is our High Priest and our Head. Every fact has been accomplished. The Lord Jesus fulfilled the testament, having accomplished all that was written down and then bequeathed them to us. God made a covenant with us concerning all these things, and every fact that the Lord Jesus accomplished is a portion for us to enjoy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE LINE OF DISPENSATIONS

In the Scriptures there is a clear distinction between different dispensations, and the line of these dispensations ties together the entire Bible. According to the Bible, there are four dispensations; according to some Bible scholars, there are seven dispensations. The former emphasizes the content of the dispensations, and the latter emphasizes God's seven arrangements with regard to man. Now let us consider the line of dispensations according to these two ways of division.

FOUR DISPENSATIONS—DIVISIONS ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

The Dispensation of Sin and Death, the Dispensation of the Patriarchs—from Adam to Moses (Genesis 1 through Exodus 19)

Romans 5:14 says, "Death reigned from Adam until Moses." From Adam to Moses men fell under the authority of sin. In this dispensation men were under sin and ruled by death, so death reigned through sin. The record in Genesis 5 says that after Adam was created, he lived for a number of years and died; he begot a son named Seth, who also lived for a number of years and died. The entire record of chapter 5 is filled with these words—*lived*, *begot*, and *died*. Why do people die? People die because of sin. So from Adam to Moses, even though there was no law, men lived in sin and were under death.

The Dispensation of the Law—from Moses to the First Coming of Christ (Exodus 19 to the End of the Old Testament)

John 1:17 says, "The law was given through Moses; grace and reality came through Jesus Christ." In the period of time from Moses to the first coming of

Christ, the law was present in addition to sin and death. When the law was given, it confirmed the situation of man being under sin and death; this period is called the dispensation of the law.

The Dispensation of Grace—from Christ's First Coming to His Second Coming (the Beginning of the New Testament to Revelation 19)

Hebrews 9:26 and 28 tell us that in the first coming of Christ man's sin was put away, and in His second coming, man's salvation will be fully consummated. Between these two comings there is the dispensation of grace, which is the dispensation of the church.

In His death related to His first coming, the Lord Jesus satisfied the righteous requirements of the law and also abolished the requirement to live by the law of the commandments in ordinances (Rom. 8:3; Eph. 2:15). He bore our sins, that is, dealt with our sins, and nullified death. Thus He opened the door of grace, bringing in grace that grace could reign. Now anyone who receives Him is immediately released from the law, from sin, and from death to enter into grace.

The Dispensation of Righteousness—the Dispensation of the Kingdom (Revelation 19 and 20)

The period of one thousand years—from the Lord's second coming, the beginning of the millennial kingdom, until the end of the millennial kingdom—is the dispensation of righteousness. In this dispensation righteousness will reign as king; Christ will judge all the people of the earth with righteousness.

As soon as this dispensation is over, the new heaven and new earth, eternity without ending, will begin. This is recorded in Revelation 21 and 22. Before the first dispensation there was eternity, and after the fourth dispensation there will be eternity. First, there was eternity without beginning, and last,

there will be eternity without ending. Between these two eternities there is a gap called time, and time is subdivided into four dispensations. This is how the dispensations are divided according to the Bible.

SEVEN DISPENSATIONS— DIVISIONS ACCORDING TO BIBLE SCHOLARS

Dispensations occupy a significant position in the Bible. According to the Bible, there are four dispensations. However, many Bible scholars point to seven dispensations, according to the unfolding of God's dispensational arrangements with man in the Bible. This division into seven dispensations does not emphasize the content of the dispensations but rather God's seven arrangements with regard to man.

These seven dispensations are seven arrangements. In English *dispensation* can also be translated as "arrangement" or "economy." The seven dispensations are God's seven economies, operations, arrangements, managements, or administrations. Therefore, the seven dispensations emphasize God's seven different operations, arrangements, managements, and administrations in His dealings with man.

The Dispensation of Innocence

The dispensation of innocence covers the time from Adam's creation until the time he was driven out of the garden, a period of no more than one hundred and thirty years. Adam begot Seth when he was one hundred and thirty years old, and Seth was born outside of the garden of Eden. Therefore, the dispensation of innocence lasted only a very short time. In this dispensation, or in this arrangement of God, man lived directly before God and was directly ruled by God. Therefore, this dispensation can also be called the dispensation of divine government.

In this dispensation man did not need to wear clothes because he did not have sin or even a consciousness of sin. Without the shame of sin there was no need to wear clothes. In this dispensation there was no need for man to be justified because he was without sin. After man was created by God, he met all of God's requirements and was "very good" in the eyes of God (Gen. 1:31). God gave man herbs and fruit, the plant food, as nourishment to sustain his

life. At this point God did not need to tell man to eat meat by slaughtering animals and shedding their blood, because man had not yet sinned. Therefore, there was no need for the shedding of blood. Man lived directly before God. This is an arrangement by God, so this is a dispensation.

The Dispensation of Conscience

The dispensation of conscience was from the time of Adam's fall to the destruction of the earth by the flood. According to the record in the Bible, the dispensation of conscience and the dispensation of innocence lasted 1,656 years. It is called the dispensation of conscience because once man ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the function of the conscience in knowing good and evil and right and wrong became especially prominent. Since man could know good and evil, he had to be responsible to his own conscience and live before his own conscience.

At this point, due to the fall, man lived before God indirectly instead of being ruled by God directly. In the dispensation of conscience, God governed man through the conscience. In this dispensation man was under his own ruling, so this period of time can also be called the dispensation of self-government.

The Dispensation of Human Government

The dispensation of human government was from the time Noah left the ark to the time that the city of Babel and the tower of Babel were built, comprising a total of four hundred and twenty-seven years. At this time man fell a step further into the dispensation of human government. God gave man the authority to rule over others. Genesis 9:6 says, "Whoever sheds man's blood, / By man shall his blood be shed." This means that man should not kill others or else others would rule over him and punish him with death. From the time Noah left the ark, God gave man the authority to rule over others. Ever since then, man has fallen from self-government to human government.

Formerly, man lived directly before God and under God's government; but due to man's first fall, he fell from living before God to living before his conscience, falling under the ruling of the conscience. After the flood destroyed the world, man went through a second fall, falling from the conscience to human government; that is, man could be governed by others.

At this point man fell to the uttermost, so God gave up on the descendants of Adam and called Abraham to be the beginning of a new race.

Everyone knows that the only reason that the world today still has some degree of order and is not overly chaotic is because of human government. If we take away police stations, policemen, and courts of law, cities would become totally lawless. The world relies on human government because the world is fallen. But Christians are different. After we have been saved, we should at least come back from the rule of man to the rule of the conscience. We do not need the police to tell us that we should not steal; our conscience should tell us that we should not do such things. Once we are saved and our conscience is activated, we should go from human government to self-government. If we follow the feeling of our conscience to deal with every matter that is inappropriate or that it feels uneasy about, we would increasingly go from our conscience to God and be governed directly by God in our spirit. Newly saved Christians go from human government to self-government; and when they have had some growth in the spirit, they go from self-government to divine government, living directly before God.

The path of the fall of Adam's descendants is from divine government to self-government and then to human government. At this point God had to have a new start; He turned from the Adamic race to the Abrahamic race. God called Abraham out of Babel, where mankind had fallen to the uttermost. This was the beginning of the fourth dispensation.

The Dispensation of Promise

This dispensation covers the time from the calling of Abraham to the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, a period of four hundred and thirty years. After God called Abraham out of Babel, He promised him that all the families on the earth would be blessed through his seed, Christ. God promised to deal with man by grace in Christ. However, the Israelites were unwilling to draw near to this promise and to receive this grace because they did not know themselves, including their own failures and weaknesses. Instead, they presumptuously thought that they could justify themselves before God. Thus, the dispensation of promise was temporarily put aside.

The Dispensation of the Law

Because the children of Israel, Abraham's descendants, did not know themselves adequately and wanted to justify themselves before God rather than drawing near to His promised grace, God was forced to put aside the promise temporarily. The law came to expose and prove man's weakness and corruption so that he would be convinced of his condition and draw near to grace. This period of about one thousand five hundred years, from the giving of the law at Mount Sinai to the coming of John the Baptist to preach the gospel, is called the dispensation of the law. Concerning this, please refer to Luke 16:16.

The Dispensation of Grace

The dispensation of grace is from the coming of John to preach the gospel to the second coming of Christ. As soon as John came to preach the word, the dispensation of the law ended, and the dispensation of the gospel, or the dispensation of grace, began. This is clearly referred to in Mark 1:1-5. Out of necessity and against His original intention, God dealt with man through law; God's original intention was to deal with man through grace. Galatians 3:17 tells us that the promise of grace was not annulled by the law, which came later. Romans 3:19-20 also says that God used the law temporarily so that man would fall under His judgment until His Son would come in the flesh to fulfill His promise of grace. His Son came as the real seed of Abraham to fulfill the promise of grace given to Abraham. In this way God was able to deal with man through grace, not just according to the law, so that man could live under grace. With the termination of the law, grace can reign; the dispensation of grace is a continuation of the promise God gave Abraham.

The Dispensation of the Kingdom

The dispensation of the kingdom extends from the time of Christ's second coming to the time of Satan's being cast into the lake of fire, covering a period of a thousand years (Rev. 20:10). For one thousand years Christ and all the overcoming believers will reign together over the future world. At the end of one thousand years, as 1 Corinthians 15 says, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire, the Lord will deliver up the kingdom to His God and Father, and the new heaven and the new earth in eternity will begin (v. 24).

These seven dispensations are seven arrangements. In the first dispensation man did not need to wear clothes, nor did he need to eat meat.

In the second dispensation man needed clothes. In the third dispensation man needed to slaughter animals, shed blood, and eat meat. In the fourth dispensation God dealt with man through the promise of grace. In the fifth dispensation God dealt with man through the strict and righteous law because man did not know himself. In the sixth dispensation God put aside the law and dealt with man through grace in Christ because His Son came to fulfill His promised grace. When the seventh dispensation, the kingdom, comes, He will reign with righteousness, exercising His authority on the earth. These are His arrangements, His management. The seven dispensations are God's seven arrangements, His seven managements.

CHAPTER NINE

THE LINE OF MAN

The Bible is not merely a book about God; it is also a book about man. If God and the Lord Jesus were taken away from the Bible, the Bible would become an empty book. In the same way, if man was removed from the Bible, the Bible would have no one to receive God's speaking. Therefore, just as God and the Lord Jesus occupy a particular place in the Bible, man also occupies a particular place. The Bible reveals God and the Lord Jesus in order to show forth man. The essential object of God's revealing of Himself is man; therefore, man occupies a very significant place in the Bible.

In the entire Bible, man probably takes up a greater number of pages than God and the Lord Jesus, because a greater part of the words written in the Bible deal with the things concerning man. The Bible plainly and clearly reveals the whole story of man in detail. If we really want to know man, there is no way other than to read the Bible carefully. This is because no other book in the entire world has ever described man's condition as thoroughly as the Bible. Therefore, if we want to know the Bible, we also have to know the line of man in the Bible.

In the Bible there are different groups of people, and God speaks differently to each group. For instance, some words are spoken to the children of Israel, so we should not apply them to the believers. Some words are spoken to the church, so we should not apply them to the Jews. Every speaking has a particular group of people as its focus, and if we make a mistake in recognizing the object of a particular speaking, we will have a great problem in applying it. Therefore, when we read the Bible, we must pay attention to the line of man.

THE ADAMIC RACE

Genesis 1:1—8:19 concerns the Adamic race, Adam and his descendants. To speak about the Adamic race is to speak about the first group of people in the human race. In this period all human beings in the world were of the Adamic race; there was no distinction among Israelites, Gentiles, or the church.

Concerning the first group of people, there are five main points that require our attention.

Created

We all need to read Genesis 2. Adam was created in God's image with a spirit, a soul, and a body, prepared to receive God's life and reign for God.

Fallen

Adam fell not long after he was created.

God Coming to Seek and to Save

According to the account in Genesis 3, as soon as Adam fell, he hid himself and was afraid to see God. Therefore, God came to seek and to save him. On the one hand, God promised that the seed of the woman would come to be his Savior; on the other hand, God made coats of skin for him; this was done in anticipation of redemption.

Rejecting the Way of Salvation, Making a Living for Themselves, and Becoming Wicked to the Extreme

Beginning with Cain the majority of the people in the Adamic race rejected God's way of salvation; they tried to make a living and invented a culture for themselves. As a result, they became wicked to the extreme and corrupt to the uttermost. As a consequence, they incurred God's judgment.

God Coming to Judge and Destroy by the Flood, and Only a Family of Eight Being Saved

God then submerged the whole earth with the flood; all the people were destroyed by the flood except for Noah's family of eight. At this point the Adamic race came to an end. This was the first group of people in the Bible.

THE DESCENDANTS OF NOAH

The descendants of Noah are recorded in Genesis 8:20—11:9. Noah's descendants are the second group of people in the Bible. Although God terminated the Adamic race with the flood, He rescued Noah and his family of eight. God established Noah as a new father, and his three sons became the fathers of the three races of mankind.

Whereas Adam was the father established by God in His creation, Noah was the father established by God in His salvation. The father in God's creation was completely destroyed and terminated due to the corruption of his descendants; therefore, God saved a man—Noah—to be the father of mankind on the earth who had been judged and destroyed. Concerning Noah's descendants, there are four main points.

Spreading over the Whole Earth

Noah's three sons greatly multiplied, and soon their descendants spread over the whole earth.

Separating into Nations

Noah's descendants separated into many nations on the earth. Beginning at this point in time, nations began to appear on the earth among men.

Rebelling Collectively against God

However, Noah's descendants joined together and collectively rebelled against God; this is the story of Babel. Before Babel, people on the earth opposed God individually; they never reached the point of being organized together. At Babel, however, men organized themselves to form an alliance, and they all joined together to rebel against God. They wanted to build a tower whose top reached the heavens so that they might make a name for themselves and remove the name of God from the face of the earth.

God Coming to Judge and to Scatter

Just as the Adamic race was terminated due to God's judgment, the line of Noah's descendants was also terminated by God's judgment. Whereas the previous judgment involved destruction by the flood, this judgment involved the confounding of their language so that they would not be able to form an alliance. They were scattered due to their inability to communicate with each

other. At this point Noah's descendants came to an end, and a third group of people became the focus of the Bible.

THE DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM— ISRAEL AS THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

Israel, as the chosen descendants of Abraham, is seen in the record from Genesis 11:10 through Malachi 4. This group of people occupies most of the writing of the Old Testament. With the exception of the first ten and a half chapters of Genesis, which speak of the first two groups of people, the remainder of the Old Testament concerns this group of people.

Being Called

Adam was a father, Noah was a father, and Abraham also was a father. Adam was the father of the created ones, Noah was the father of the saved ones, and Abraham was the father of the called ones. The group God created failed, and the group God saved also failed; therefore, God came to call out another group of people.

Inheriting the Promise

God called Abraham and gave him the promise of grace, and later, his descendants inherited this promise. The content of this promise is the gospel that God is preaching to us today (Eph. 2:17; Gal. 3:8-9).

Falling into Egypt

Although the descendants of Abraham were heirs of the promise, they did not stand firm in their position to inherit the promise; rather, they left Canaan and went down to Egypt, falling from their position as heirs of promise to a position of slaves.

Going out of Egypt

They suffered afflictions in Egypt as slaves, so God came in to deliver them. Delivered by God out of Egypt, they were able to leave their position as slaves and return to their position as heirs of promise.

Receiving the Law

After they came out of Egypt and arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai, they received the law from God; they received God's holy Word.

Passing through the Wilderness

Then they passed through the wilderness, where they received God's leading, encountered numerous circumstances, and saw many signs and wonders. In their journey God was manifested on many occasions among them.

Entering into Canaan

They conquered the seven tribes of Canaan and captured the land of Canaan, allotting it for their inheritance.

Gaining the Land to Establish the Kingdom

Once they had gained the land, they established the kingdom. This brings us to the time of David and Solomon.

Becoming Desolate and Being Captured

Not long after they established the kingdom, they were defeated, desolate, and carried away to the Gentile nations. The cause of their defeat, the condition of their desolation, and the result of their captivity are all recorded in 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

Being Restored and Returning to Their Own Land

When seventy years of captivity were fulfilled, they were restored and brought back to Jerusalem in the land of Canaan.

Becoming Desolate Again after Their Restoration

Not long after they were restored and returned to their own land, however, they became desolate again.

God Coming to Judge and to Forsake Them Temporarily

Due to God's judgment, the third group of people came to a temporary end at this point. Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44; 21:5-6, 20-24; and 23:27-31 all show how God would judge His elect, the people of Israel, temporarily forsaking them until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

We can be very clear about the things concerning Israel as the chosen people of God if we remember these twelve points. In this long section of the Old Testament, from Genesis 11:10 to the end of Malachi 4, even though the Gentiles are sometimes mentioned, they are not the main subject; they are mentioned only because of their association with the children of Israel. In this long section of the Bible, the main character is Israel, the chosen people of God, the descendants of Abraham.

In summary, there are three groups of people in the Old Testament—the Adamic race, the descendants of Noah, and the descendants of Abraham. We also can say that there are three fathers in the Old Testament: the first is the father of the created people; the second is the father of the saved people; and the third is the father of the called people. If we keep these things clearly in mind, we will have a thorough and accurate knowledge of the Old Testament.

THE CHURCH—THE BELIEVERS

The fourth group of people in the Bible is the church. The church is composed of the believers; the believers are the components of the church. Individually, they are the believers; corporately, they are the church. The first twenty-six books of the New Testament are concerned specifically with the church, that is, the believers. However, the four Gospels also contain many references to God's chosen people, Israel. Since the four Gospels are a transitional point in the Bible, involving a shift from Israel as God's chosen people to the church, they speak about both the church and Israel, God's chosen people. The main object of the four Gospels is the church, even though the background is Israel, the chosen people. Concerning the church, there are five main points.

Hearing the Gospel

The first great thing in God's dealing with the church is to preach the gospel. The church was produced through hearing the gospel.

Receiving Life

A greater part of the Gospels emphasizes hearing the gospel, but there is also a part that emphasizes receiving life. At the end of the Gospels the church has heard the gospel and received life.

Receiving the Holy Spirit

In the book of Acts the church receives the Holy Spirit.

Becoming the Dwelling Place of God, the Body of Christ

Because the church has heard the gospel, received life, and received the Holy Spirit, she becomes the dwelling place of God, the Body of Christ. To God, the church is a dwelling place; to Christ, the church is His Body. This is revealed in the Epistles.

Being Defeated and Becoming Desolate

At the end of the Epistles, almost all the "second" Epistles speak about the defeat and desolation of the church. Even though the church has heard the gospel, received life, received the Holy Spirit, and become the dwelling place of God and the Body of Christ, she also falls into a situation of defeat and desolation.

THE WHOLE WORLD

In the Bible there is also a fifth section concerning man. Each of the first four sections covers a single race, but the last section, Revelation, covers all the various kinds of people together and speaks about them as a whole. Revelation shows us the outcome of all the people on the whole earth.

First Corinthians 10:32 divides the people of the world into three categories—Jews, Greeks (referring to the Gentiles), and the church. Two of these three kinds of people are descendants of Abraham. The Israelites are the descendants of Abraham in the flesh; the church (the believers) are the

heavenly descendants of Abraham. Figuratively, Abraham's descendants in the flesh, the Israelites, are like the dust of the earth, while Abraham's heavenly descendants, the church (the believers), are like the stars of heaven. When God first made a promise to Abraham, He promised two groups of descendants. One group became His chosen people through the flesh; the other group became His chosen people through faith. In addition to these two groups of chosen people, there is still another group of people on earth; they are the Gentiles, the nations, who were left from Adam through Noah. Now let us consider these groups of people separately in Revelation.

The Church

The Lord Judging the Desolation of the Church

The preceding section points out that the church became desolate; Revelation 2 and 3 speak of the Lord coming to judge the desolation of the church.

The Lord Calling the Overcomers

The Lord calls the overcomers out of the desolate church to meet His need, as shown in Revelation 2 and 3.

The Overcomers Bringing in the Lord's Kingdom

Revelation 11 and 12 show that the overcomers in the church will conquer God's enemy and bring in the Lord's kingdom.

Being Raptured

Revelation 14 speaks of the rapture of the overcomers.

The Overcomers Reigning with the Lord

Revelation 20:4 says that the overcomers will reign with the Lord for a thousand years.

All the Saved Ones Participating in the New Jerusalem in Eternity

Revelation 21 and 22 say that all the saved ones in the church will participate in the New Jerusalem in eternity. In summary, Revelation speaks concerning the church in six events: judging its desolation, calling the overcomers, bringing in the Lord's kingdom, being raptured, reigning with the Lord, and all the saved ones participating in the New Jerusalem in eternity.

The Israelites

In Their Passing through the Great Tribulation Some of the Israelites Being Kept and Saved, but the Majority Perishing

The Ones Who Are Saved Being Those Who Participate in the New Jerusalem in Eternity

Revelation contains only two points related to the Israelites. When they are passing through the time of tribulation, some will be kept by God and saved. These saved ones will participate in the New Jerusalem in eternity.

The New Jerusalem contains the names of the twelve apostles, representing the church, and also the names of the twelve tribes, representing the chosen people of Israel. The New Jerusalem will be a composition of the church and the Israelites, the two groups of chosen people, to become God's eternal dwelling place in the universe and a vessel of God's glory.

The Gentiles—the Nations

Being Judged and Stricken with Afflictions

Revelation 6 shows that there have been increasing afflictions on the earth after the ascension of the Lord Jesus. For over two thousand years these afflictions have become increasingly more severe and common. These afflictions are God's smiting and judging of the people of the world. They also are a tool used by God to open people to His gospel. Many sinners are willing to repent when they are stricken with afflictions; very few are willing to receive the gospel when it is peaceful on earth. Instead, when the earth is stricken with all kinds of disasters, the gospel is easily preached, and people are readily saved.

The first matter concerning the Gentiles in Revelation is that they are under judgment and stricken with afflictions. In this age we should not put too much hope in enjoying peace because God has determined that the Gentiles on the earth would be stricken with all kinds of natural disasters and man-made calamities.

Ultimately Being Judged by the Lord— the Evil Ones Perishing, While the Good Ones Being Kept Alive and Entering into the Millennial Kingdom as Citizens

Throughout the generations the Gentiles have been under the judgment of afflictions. Ultimately, when the Lord comes, He will judge them, separating them into evil and good; those who are evil will perish instantly, and those who are good will be citizens in the millennial kingdom. These citizens are the "sheep" in Matthew 25. The evildoers in Matthew 25 are the "goats" who perish.

After the Millennial Kingdom, the Last Rebellious Ones Being Devoured by Fire

At the end of the millennial kingdom some of the people who are citizens in the millennial kingdom will be deceived by the devil to rebel against God, and they will be devoured by the fire from God. This is revealed in Revelation 20.

Those Remaining Becoming the Nations in Eternity, Being Ruled by the New Jerusalem

Revelation 21 says that the nations will walk by the light of the New Jerusalem; this means that the nations will be ruled by the New Jerusalem. At the end of the millennial kingdom some of the citizens in the millennial kingdom will rebel against God and be devoured by fire; those who do not participate in this rebellion will become the nations in the new heaven and the new earth in eternity, being ruled by the New Jerusalem.

All the people in the Bible, from Adam to the New Jerusalem, have been mentioned. The beginning of man is with Adam, and man's conclusion is seen in the reigning of the New Jerusalem and the nations under its ruling.

CHAPTER TEN

THE LINE OF SATAN

Just as the Bible speaks about God and man, it also speaks about Satan. We should not forget that immediately after man was created, God put him in front of two trees: one was the tree of life, and the other was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We have mentioned repeatedly that the tree of life denotes God and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil denotes Satan. Therefore, in the very beginning of the Bible we see these three characters: God, Satan, and man. The entire Bible is a record of the things concerning these three characters. Therefore, in reading the Bible, we should not only know the things concerning God and the things concerning man, we should also know the things concerning Satan. If we have a good grasp concerning these three lines—the line of God, the line of man, and the line of Satan, the Bible will become crystal clear to us. Now we will look at the line of Satan. In this line the points that require our attention are numerous and somewhat complicated.

THE CREATION AND ANOINTING OF SATAN

Originally, Satan was created and anointed by God.

Being the Created and Anointed Cherub Originally

Cherubim have the highest position among the angels in the heavens, and in particular, Satan was an anointed cherub (Ezek. 28:12-15); thus, he was unquestionably the highest among the angels. Jude 9 says, “Michael the archangel, when he contended with the devil and disputed concerning the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a reviling judgment against him but said, The Lord rebuke you.” From this we can see that even Michael’s position was lower than that of Satan. Therefore, Satan’s position was very high. Ephesians 2:2 also says that Satan is the ruler of the authority of the air.

Being Set by God to Be over the Original Universe

According to the Scriptures, the anointed cherub, the archangel, was originally set by God to be over the universe, the preadamic universe. In Luke 4:6 Satan said to the Lord Jesus that the glory of all the kingdoms of the inhabited earth had been delivered to him. We should realize that Satan could not deceive the Lord Jesus, nor did the Lord Jesus refute his word. What Satan said was a fact. Therefore, we should ask, "When was this glory delivered to him?" The Bible does not speak of it being delivered after Adam was created, because Satan fell before Adam was created. Therefore, this delivery must have occurred before Adam was created.

THE REBELLION OF SATAN

Rebelling against God due to Pride and Becoming Satan, God's Adversary

Satan was once a created and anointed cherub, appointed by God to rule over the former universe. At one point, however, he rebelled against God and became Satan, God's adversary, due to his pride. This is clearly shown in Ezekiel 28:15 and 17 and Isaiah 14:13-14.

Being Followed by One-third of the Angels under Him in His Rebellion against God, Who Became the Evil Spirits in the Air— the Forces of Evil

Revelation 12:4 shows that when Satan rebelled against God, one-third of the angels under him followed. Ephesians 6:12 says that these rebellious angels are forces of evil in the heavenlies. Furthermore, Ephesians 2:2 says that Satan is the ruler of these evil spirits, these forces of evil in the air. Therefore, when Satan rebelled, some of the angels under him also rebelled; these rebellious angels became the evil spirits in the air, the rulers and authorities of the air, with Satan as their leader.

Being Followed by a Group of Living Creatures in His Rebellion against God, Who Became the Unclean Demons and Evil Spirits on the Earth and in the Sea

According to the record in the Bible, the unclean demons and evil spirits who are upon the surface of the earth and in the waters of the sea must be a group of living creatures who were under Satan in the preadamic world. When Satan rebelled against God, they followed him and also rebelled against God; thus they came under God's judgment of destruction by the flood and became the unclean demons and evil spirits, who today are on the earth and in the sea. Matthew 8:32, Mark 5:9-13, and Luke 8:2 all speak of the demons on the earth.

We need to see these three groups: Satan, the fallen angels under him, who became the evil spirits in the air, and the demons on the earth and in the water. We should not regard demons as angels, nor as humans who died. They are something different. According to the Scriptures, we can infer that they must have been a group of living creatures under Satan in the preadamic world, who became demons through their rebellion and God's judgment.

Defiling and Destroying the Universe under His Rule through His Rebellion

The preadamic universe was delivered into the hands of the cherub, the archangel. But the universe was defiled and destroyed because of his rebellion. This can be seen in Job 9:5-6 and Genesis 1:2.

THE NATURE OF SATAN

Sin

Satan's nature is sin, and it results in sinning (1 John 3:8). Sin is Satan's nature. Just as the nature of a table is wood and the nature of a microphone is steel, the nature of Satan is sin. Satan is a constitution of sin; thus, sin is his nature.

Lies

Just as sin is Satan's nature, lying is also his nature (John 8:44). Sin is an inward condition, whereas lying is the outward expression. Satan not only lies with words, he also lies with actions. Whatever Satan does is a lie and false. Just as Satan's nature is sin, it is also his nature to lie. There is nothing but lies in his nature, so he is the father of liars.

Murder

Murder is also in Satan's nature. In God's eyes Satan is fully related to sins, lies, and murder. Satan's work on man has one principle—to murder man. The Lord Jesus said that Satan was a murderer from the beginning (v. 44). He not only murders those whom he persecutes, he even murders those who follow him so that in the end even they are doomed to destruction and perdition.

THE TITLES OF SATAN

Great Dragon

The great dragon signifies Satan as the cruel one (Rev. 12:9; 20:2).

Ancient Serpent

The ancient serpent signifies Satan as the crafty one (12:9; 20:2).

Devil

In Greek the name devil has two meanings—"accuser" and "slanderer." Satan accuses men before God and slanders God before men (v. 2).

Satan

Satan means "adversary." As God's adversary, Satan opposes God (v. 2).

Ruler of the World

The Lord Jesus said that Satan is the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). The whole world is in subjection to Satan's authority and is ruled by Satan.

God of This Age

On the one hand, Satan is the ruler of this world, the ruler of the system on the earth, which is a systematized world (2 Cor. 4:4). On the other hand, Satan is also the god of this age. Originally, there was only God, but in this age Satan has actually usurped God's position in man. He took over God's

position and replaced God to become god to men; thus, he is the god of the present age.

Being the ruler of the world speaks of Satan ruling over man, and being the god of this age speaks of man worshipping Satan. Today not many on the earth are free from his rule, and not many can avoid worshipping him. On the one hand, men are ruled by Satan, and on the other hand, men worship him because he is the ruler of this world and the god of this age.

Evil One

The Bible speaks of "the evil one" in a number of places (1 John 3:12; 5:19). *The evil one* can also be translated as "the evil." Satan is evil. In the universe there is something called the evil, and this evil is Satan.

Father of Lies

God is a Father, and Satan is also a father (John 8:44). God is the Father of lights (James 1:17); everything of Him can withstand the shining of light and is true. Satan, however, is the father of lies; everything of him is a lie and a falsehood. All lies come from Satan; he is the source of lies.

Tempter

In the Chinese Bible, in some places *tempter* is translated as "the deceiver." To tempt is to deceive, to turn falsehood into truth and truth into falsehood, thereby confusing truth and falsehood (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thes. 3:5).

Ruler of the Authority of the Air

The authority of the air refers to the angels who followed Satan to rebel against God (Eph. 2:2). Satan set them as the authority in the air, and he himself is their ruler.

Beelzebul, Ruler of the Demons

The Jews reviled the Lord Jesus by saying that He cast out the demons by Beelzebul, ruler of the demons (Matt. 12:24). This Beelzebul, ruler of the demons, is another name for Satan. *Beelzebul* is Greek; its Hebrew equivalent is *Baal-zebub,* which is spoken of in 2 Kings 1:3. Both names mean "the lord

of flies" or "the lord of the dunghill." This is a description of Satan's filthiness. There is nothing clean in him; the filth of the entire world is concentrated in him.

Enemy

He is the enemy of God and also the enemy of God's people (Matt. 13:39).

Belial

Belial means "base, filthy, and lawless." As Belial, Satan is mean and low, filthy and squalid, lawless and godless (2 Cor. 6:15).

Satan has at least these thirteen titles in the Bible. We will know the kind of person that Satan is if we consider all these thirteen titles.

THE KINGDOM OF SATAN

Satan Having His Kingdom and His Authority

In Matthew 12:26 the Lord Jesus clearly speaks of Satan's kingdom. In Acts 26:18 and Colossians 1:13 the apostle also speaks of Satan's authority. According to these verses, we know that Satan has a kingdom and authority.

Satan's Kingdom Having the Air and This World as Its Sphere

Ephesians 2:2 says that Satan is the ruler of the authority of the air. John 12:31 says that he is the ruler of this world. He is the ruler of the air, and he is also the ruler of this world. The sphere of his kingdom includes the air and the earth.

Satan's Subordinates

Satan's subordinates can be divided into five categories: fallen angels serving at a higher level as his authorities; a group of angels serving as his army in the air; numerous angels serving as his messengers; people on the earth serving as his ministers; and countless unclean spirits and demons serving as his subordinates.

Authorities in the Air—the Princes

Ephesians 6:12; 2:2; and 1:21 speak of Satan's authorities in the air. These authorities are also called princes, such as the prince of Persia and the prince of Javan spoken of in Daniel 10:13 and 20. These evil princes are the authorities in the air. According to the Bible, the authorities in the air are a group of angels who had authority under Satan when he was anointed to rule over the universe. When Satan rebelled against God, they followed him in his rebellion and became a group of authorities under him.

The Host on High

In the kingdom of Satan there are not only authorities in the air but also an army. Isaiah 24:21 says, "In that day Jehovah will punish / On high the host on high." A careful reading of the context of this chapter shows that the host on high refers to Satan's army in the air. Revelation 12:7 also clearly shows us that Satan has an army; the host of Satan is in the air.

Angels

Satan also has angels. Matthew 25:41 indicates that Satan's angels will be cast with him into the lake of fire in the future. This shows that there are many angels under Satan. These angels are the ones who rebelled with him, as indicated in Revelation 12:4 and 9. These verses indicate that the tail of the great dragon dragged away the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth; *stars* refers to the angels. From these verses we can conclude that at least a third of the angels followed Satan when he rebelled against God. Of these angels, some are the authorities in the air spoken of in Ephesians 6, who are on high, and some are common angels.

Ministers

In 2 Corinthians 11:15 the apostle Paul says that Satan has ministers. These ministers do not refer to fallen angels or to unclean spirits; they refer to people who are used by Satan. When the apostle spoke this word, he was referring to false apostles. False apostles are sent by Satan into the church to do a damaging work; they are ministers of Satan who serve him by running errands for him.

Unclean Demons and Evil Spirits

According to the four Gospels, the demons cast out by the Lord Jesus when He was on the earth were unclean demons and evil spirits. Many who read the Bible confuse unclean demons and evil spirits with angels, thinking that the demons are fallen angels. Actually, these are two different groups. The fallen angels dwell in the air. Even though they have no physical body, they have a spiritual body. However, unclean demons and evil spirits dwell on the earth, as seen in the Gospels. They particularly dwell in the sea and in the water; they are a group of disembodied spirits. They must have had a body in the past, but they became disembodied spirits because of God's judgment; this is the reason they love to enter into man's body and dwell in it. If they are unable to possess the body of a man, they will possess the body of an animal. When demons came out from the two demon-possessed men in Matthew 8, they went into the hogs and rushed into the sea; this shows that they also can possess animals. Their dwelling place is different from the fallen angels, and their nature is also different from the fallen angels.

Those who have seriously studied the Bible have concluded that the unclean demons and evil spirits must be from a group of living creatures who were on the earth in the preadamic world. It is hard for us to say what they were exactly, but they must have been a group of living creatures, and when Satan rebelled against God, they followed in the rebellion and were judged by God.

The Bible clearly shows us that God judged the earth by flooding it with water. The living creatures on the earth were judged by God and drowned in the water. During God's six-day re-creation, He said that all He had created were good except for two things: one was the air and the other one was the water upon the surface of the earth. This is because the evil power of Satan and his authorities were in the air, and the unclean demons and evil spirits were in the water upon the surface of the earth.

Concerning this matter, we can say that all the attacks in the Bible against God's children come either from the air or from the sea. This can be seen in the four Gospels. When the Lord Jesus crossed the sea, the wind came and the waves in the sea also rose. We should not assume that this was merely a natural phenomenon. The wind came from the air because Satan's authorities were in the air; the waves rose up from the sea because Satan's unclean demons were in the sea. These two parties cooperated and stirred up a storm.

This storm did not occur naturally; rather, Satan's evil powers were causing trouble in order to hinder the Lord Jesus' journey because He was preparing to cast out many demons after He crossed over the sea. The Lord Jesus came to the earth to purge Satan's kingdom of its power. This is the reason the Lord encountered resistance from storms everywhere.

Satan's People

The citizens of Satan's kingdom are the fallen people in the whole world. First John 5:19 says, "The whole world lies in the evil one." According to the sense of the word in John 3:16, *world* refers to the people in the world. All the people in the world lie in the evil one; all of them are citizens of his kingdom. There are five categories of Satan's subordinates, together with all the fallen people in the whole world as his citizens.

THE WORK OF SATAN THROUGHOUT THE AGES

Satan's Corrupting Work on Man

Seducing Man to Eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and Causing Man to Have His Nature of Sin, and Being at Enmity with People Who Belong to God

Ever since Satan seduced man to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and caused man to have his nature of sin (Gen. 3:1-7; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14), he has been at enmity with all who belong to God, all who stand on God's side (Gen. 3:15).

Causing Fallen Man to Reject God's Way of Salvation, Which Resulted in Man Committing Sins, Falling Away from God, and Making a Living and Producing a Culture for Himself

Satan caused man to reject God's way of salvation through Cain and his descendants (4:3, 5-12; 1 John 3:12, 8; John 8:44).

Causing Man to Be Corrupted to the Uttermost by Angels under Him Joining with Man through Marriage, Resulting in Man's Destruction by the Flood

The angels under Satan joined with man through marriage and corrupted the earth during Noah's time. Genesis 6:4 says, "The sons of God came in to the daughters of men." Many say that the sons of God spoken of here refer to the godly descendants of Adam—Seth and his descendants. However, if we read carefully, we will see that *sons of God* refers to the fallen angels. The angels under Satan came to corrupt man, mingling with man, corrupting man to the uttermost and bringing in God's judgment.

Causing Man to Establish Nations and Turn Away from God's Rule by Utilizing the Authority God Gave to Man to Rule Others

The most prominent person who was utilized by Satan was Nimrod (10:5-11, 32). He was the first person on the earth to reign as a king; he became the first king. He also was the first to establish a nation. He took the lead to overthrow the authority of God's rule, to set himself up as a king, to rule over others, and to establish a kingdom. This was Satan's work.

Instigating Man to Collectively Rebel against God

The story of Babel involves the collective rebellion against God (11:3-4). Archaeologists and historians tell us that when the city of Babel and the tower of Babel were being built, the names of idols were inscribed on all the bricks. This was Satan's effort to blot out the name of God from the face of the earth.

Whenever man exalts his own name, he exalts idols. At Babel, Satan's instigation among men reached a peak. They collectively rebelled to abolish

God's authority from the earth; in other words, they intended to force God from the earth to the heavens. It was as if Satan were saying to God, "Since You will not allow me to exercise my authority in the heavens, I will not allow You to exercise Your authority on the earth. Go back!"

The condition of today's world is the same, especially in totalitarian nations, whose intent is to push God from the earth to the heavens, to eliminate God from the universe; this is Satan's work. This work began by him injecting man with his poisonous nature, his evil nature, and eventually led to him instigating man to collectively overthrow God's authority and to force God from the earth. This is Satan's corruption of man.

Satan's Attack on Those Who Fear God

According to the Bible, Satan's work in the universe also involves attacking those who fear God. He is always trying to attack those who fear God. This can be seen in the book of Job.

Accusing Falsely

In the book of Job, Satan falsely accused the God-fearing Job twice before God (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6). In his false accusations he did his best to find fault with Job. However, he could not find any fault, so his accusations became slander. First, he accuses (the name devil means "accuser"), and if he cannot find any fault, he slanders. He said, "Does Job fear God without cause? Have You not set a hedge around him and his household and all that he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his possessions are spread throughout the land. But stretch forth Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face" (1:9-11). This is slander.

Assailing

Not only did Satan falsely accuse Job before God and slander God, he greatly assailed Job when God gave him the permission, launching an assault on the environment around Job and then inflicting great harm to Job's body. These are different ways in which Satan attacks those who fear God.

Satan's attacks are always from the circumference to the center; he also calls upon his subordinates. For example, the wind came from the air (v. 19),

the Chaldeans came (v. 17), the Sabeans came (v. 15), and his ministers came (2:11). When Satan attacked Job, he called upon nearly all his subjects.

Satan's Damaging Work on God's Chosen People

In Egypt

Ill-treating, Usurping, and Detaining Them through Pharaoh

Exodus shows that after God's chosen people went down to Egypt, Satan ill-treated them, usurped them, detained them, and tried to annihilate them through Pharaoh's hands. This is revealed in Exodus 1:8-18; 5:2-23; 8:25-28; and 10:10-11 and 24-27.

Causing Them to Not Listen to God through Hard Work and Labor

God spoke to the children of Israel through Moses, yet Pharaoh placed work more heavily upon them so that they would labor and have no heart to listen to the words which Moses spoke to them. This is revealed in Exodus 5:9 and 6:9.

At the Foot of Mount Sinai

When the children of Israel came out of Egypt and reached the foot of Mount Sinai, Satan still followed after them to damage them.

Causing Them to Reject God's Grace by Trying to Keep God's Commandments by Themselves

After the children of Israel came to the foot of Mount Sinai, the first thing Satan did was to cause them to reject God's grace. God seemed to be saying to them, "As an eagle bearing its young on wings, I have brought you out of Egypt. You did not have to do anything, to make any move, or to do any work; rather, My grace accomplished everything for you. Now I will bear you to the

land of Canaan." However, at this point, Satan caused the children of Israel to become proud. Not knowing themselves, they rejected God's grace and wanted to keep God's commandments by themselves. As a result, the law was inserted. Without Israel's rejection of God's grace, there would have been no need to give the law.

Causing Them to Make a Golden Calf and Worship It as God, Making God Jealous

At the foot of Mount Sinai, Satan's most corrupting work among the children of Israel was to cause an idol to be brought into their midst; it was not an ordinary idol but a special-made idol. They made a golden calf to worship as God; moreover, they made the calf with the gold that God intended to use to build the tabernacle, thereby making God jealous (Deut. 32:21).

In the Wilderness

After Mount Sinai they went on their journey in the wilderness. Even then Satan followed them, constantly doing a corrupting work.

Causing Them to Frequently Murmur against God

Throughout their journey in the wilderness the children of Israel frequently murmured against God, as recorded in Numbers 11:1, 4-6, 33-34; 16:41-49; and 21:4-6.

Causing Them to Not Believe in God's Promise and Great Power

Satan caused the children of Israel to not believe in God's promise to bring them into the land of Canaan with His great power. This greatly offended God, and they were struck by God, as recorded in Numbers 13:28—14:12 and 26-45.

Causing Them to Rebel

against God's Authority

Moses and Aaron were the authority God established among the children of Israel, but at one point they rebelled against this authority, overthrowing the order ordained by God among His people. This is recorded in Numbers 16:1-35.

These three matters caused the children of Israel to suffer God's smiting. In one instance God consumed them by fire, in another instance He destroyed them with a severe pestilence, and in the last instance God caused the ground to open its mouth and swallow them. These were God's smiting.

In Canaan

After they arrived in Canaan, Satan corrupted them even more.

Causing Them to Have a Hidden Sin So That They Were Not Able to Overcome Their Enemy

The children of Israel were defeated at Ai because of the hidden sin in Achan. This is shown in Joshua 7:19-26.

Causing Them to Forsake God, Worship Idols, and Do Evil So That They Were Defeated by and Put under the Bondage of Their Enemies

After the children of Israel entered into Canaan, Satan caused them to forsake God, worship idols, and do evil things so that they were constantly defeated by and put under the bondage of their enemies. This is seen in the entire book of Judges. Some important passages are 2:11-23; 3:6-8, 12-13; 4:1-3; 5:8; 6:1-6; 8:27, 33-34; 10:6-9; and 13:1.

Causing Them to Do What Was Right in Their Own Eyes and to Cast Off God's Restraint

The last sentence in the book of Judges says, "There was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25). Satan caused them to do what was right in their own eyes and to cast off God's restraint; in other words, he caused them to be lawless and godless. This is revealed in Judges 17—18; 19:1; and 21:25.

Causing the Priests among Them to Become Corrupt, Resulting in the Capture of the Ark of God

The story of the house of Eli shows the corruption of the priesthood. Eli's two sons, who served as priests, were utterly corrupt and caused the sanctuary of God to become desolate to the point that even the Ark of the Covenant was captured; this was Satan's work. Satan corrupted God's dwelling place among the children of Israel. This can be seen by reading 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 27-34; 3:12-14; and 4:1-22.

Causing Them to Reject God from Being King over Them

Satan first corrupted God's dwelling place among them, and then he took a further step to deal with God's authority by causing Israel to reject God as their King over them. This is spoken of in 1 Samuel 8:4-21 and 12:12-19.

Standing Up against Them by Causing an Offense to God to Exist among Them

In 1 Chronicles 21:1 Satan moved David to number Israel and thereby offend God.

Causing Them to Reject God's Warnings and Kill His Prophets

God established the priesthood among them, but Satan came and corrupted it. God then established the kingship among them, but Satan came and corrupted them. God finally established the prophethood among them, yet Satan came to corrupt again, causing them to kill the prophets of God. This is

seen in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22; Jeremiah 7:25-26; 20:1-2; 26:8-9; 33:1; 37:14-16; 38:1-6; and Matthew 23:29-33 and 37.

Causing Them to Forsake God

and to Serve Idols,

Becoming Corrupted to the Uttermost

So That They Were Carried Away to the Nations

Satan corrupted not only the priests but also the kings and the prophets established by God. In the end he corrupted the children of Israel to the point that they completely forsook God to serve idols. Consequently, God delivered them to their enemies to be carried away to the nations. Satan's corruption of the children of Israel reached its peak after they came to Canaan. This is revealed in 1 Kings 14:15-16, 23-26; 2 Kings 17:1-23; 21:1-17; 24:1-4, 10-20; 25:1-25; and 2 Chronicles 36:5-20.

In the Land of Captivity

Even in the land of captivity Satan did not let go of the children of Israel; he continued to corrupt them.

Causing the Babylonians

to Carry Away the Vessels in God's Temple

and to Put Them in the Babylonian Temple,

to Drink Wine and Make Merry with These Vessels

before the Idols, and to Force the People in Captivity

to Bow Down to the Idols,

Forbidding Them from Praying and Worshipping God

In the land of captivity Satan destroyed the worship of God among the children of Israel, turning them to idolatry; he even caused the Babylonians to take the vessels in the holy temple that were for the worship of God and put them in the temple of idols in Babylon from which they drank wine and made merry. Satan did these things to destroy the relationship between the people of Israel and God and to have them establish a definite relationship with the idols. This is shown in Daniel 1:2; 5:2-4, 22-23; 3:8-15; and 6:4-18.

Frustrating the Answer to Their Prayers through the Princes under Him

Daniel prayed before God concerning God's people, and his prayer was answered; yet Satan withstood the answer through the princes under him and would not allow it to come to the children of Israel. This is shown in Daniel 10:12-13 and 20-21.

Plotting to Annihilate Them through a Gentile Official

Throughout the book of Esther, Haman plotted to annihilate all the Israelites in the Gentile lands.

After the Return from Captivity

After they returned from their captivity, Satan continued to corrupt them.

Standing before God as an Adversary to the Serving Ones among Them

After returning from their captivity, the children of Israel restored the worship of God, but Satan stood before God as an adversary to those who served God among them. This is revealed in Zechariah 3:1.

Frustrating Their Work of Building the Temple through a Party of Adversaries

When they rose up to rebuild the temple, Satan came to frustrate them through a party of adversaries. Chapter 4 of Ezra covers this point.

Causing Them to Take Foreign Women as Wives and to Worship the Abominable Idols and to Do All Kinds of Evil Things according to the Gentiles

This point is covered in Ezra 9:1-2 and Nehemiah 13:23.

Frustrating Their Work

of Building the Holy City through Men

Satan not only frustrated the building of the temple, he also frustrated the building of the holy city as seen in Nehemiah 4:1-11 and 6:1-13.

Profaning the Temple They Had Returned to Rebuild, Removing the Sacrifices, and Setting Up Idols in the Temple through Antiochus Epiphanes the King of Syria

Daniel 11:28-32 says that a king of the north would come to profane the temple Ezra had returned to rebuild and that he would remove the sacrifices and set up idols in the temple. History shows that the king of the north was Antiochus Epiphanes the king of Syria.

Causing Demon-possessed People to Be Everywhere among Them

After they came back from their captivity, Satan's work of corruption continued to increase, to the point that demon-possessed people were everywhere among the nation of Israel. This was close to the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus. When the Lord Jesus first came among the Israelites, He encountered demon-possessed people everywhere; in every place there were demons needing to be cast out. This is revealed in Matthew 8:28; 9:32; 12:22, 27, 45; and 17:18 and 21.

Causing Them to Proselytize and to Make People Sons of Gehenna

According to Matthew 23:15, the Jews made people proselytes of Judaism, but in the end they were really sons of Gehenna. Satan's corruption was so great among them that he used God-worshipping religion to make people the sons of Gehenna.

Causing Them to Have Religious Hierarchy and to Be against God

This religious hierarchy was composed of the Great Sanhedrin, the Sanhedrins, and the synagogues under the Sanhedrins. This religious

hierarchy was altogether against God. This is revealed in Matthew 21:23; 26:59; John 9:22; 11:47; and Acts 5:27, 33 and 40.

Causing Them to Reject and Kill the Lord Jesus, the Son of God

This point is revealed in Matthew 10:25; 12:24, 34; 13:55-58; 21:38-39, 46; 23:37; 26:3-5, 14-16, 47-50; Luke 4:28-29; 6:11; 11:53-54; 19:47; 22:53; John 19:6, 15-18; Acts 2:23; and 3:13-15.

Causing Them to Persecute and Kill the Lord's Apostles and to Reject Their Preaching

This matter is covered in Matthew 22:6; 23:34; Acts 4:1-3; 5:17-18, 33, 40-41; 6:9-14; 7:57-60; 13:45-46, 50; 14:19; 21:27-31; 23:12-15; 25:2-3; and 28:23-29.

Causing Them to Persecute and Kill the Believers

According to John 16:2; Acts 8:1-3; 9:1; 22:4; and 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, Satan not only killed the Lord Jesus and the apostles, he also persecuted and killed the believers.

Ultimately Causing Them to Become the Synagogue of Satan

Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 say that Satan's corruption of Israel, God's chosen people, reached the point that their entire hierarchy was a synagogue of Satan. After the Israelites returned from the land of captivity, Satan brought corruption into their midst, ultimately causing every synagogue among them to become a synagogue of Satan.

In the Coming Great Tribulation

Setting Up an Idol in the Temple of the Elect through Antichrist's Opposition to God

According to the prophecy of the Bible, the Israelites will restore their nation and rebuild the temple. At that time Antichrist will be raised up, and

Satan will rise up to oppose God through him, setting up an idol in the temple, the idol being the image of Antichrist. This is revealed in Daniel 8:11-12, 25; 9:27; 11:36-37; 12:11; and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

Destroying and Afflicting Israel, God's Elect

According to Daniel 7:21-25; 8:23-25; and Revelation 12:15-17, Satan will particularly destroy and afflict Israel, God's elect, at this time. At this point Satan's damaging work on the chosen people will end temporarily.

Satan's Attack on the Lord Jesus

Trying to Destroy the Lord Immediately after His Birth

When Herod heard the report of the birth of the Lord Jesus, he murdered all the boys in Bethlehem and within its borders who were two years old and younger. However, in His wisdom God took the Lord Jesus to Egypt; after He was brought back He fled again to dwell in Galilee. This is revealed in Matthew 2:1-8, 13-16, and 19-22.

Spending Forty Days to Tempt the Lord in Every Way When He Began His Ministry

See Luke 4:1-13.

Spying on the Lord Jesus Constantly

Even though Satan left the Lord Jesus after the forty days of temptation, he followed Him constantly, spying on Him, and waiting for any opportunity to attack Him. This is seen in Luke 4:13.

Troubling the Lord through the Unclean Demons under Him

When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, He was troubled by demons wherever He went. This work of Satan is revealed in Luke 4:33-34, 41, and 8:28-29.

Betraying and Killing the Lord through One of the Lord's Disciples

Satan entered into Judas, and Judas became the embodiment of Satan to betray and kill the Lord. This is revealed in John 6:70-71; 13:2, 27; and Luke 22:3-6.

Bruising the Lord through the Cross

In the end Satan bruised the Lord Jesus through the cross. Genesis 3:15 says that the serpent would bruise the seed of the woman on the heel. We all know that a bruise on the heel is very painful.

The Defeat of Satan by the Lord Jesus

Coming That He Might Destroy the Works of the Devil

The Lord Jesus came into the world through incarnation so that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

Casting Out Unclean Demons under Satan in Every Place

Wherever the Lord went, He cast out demons; this is the Lord's victory over Satan (Matt. 8:31-32; 9:32-33; 12:22-28; Mark 1:25-26; 9:20-29).

Binding Satan

The Lord Jesus' work on the earth was to bind Satan. Matthew 12:29 says that the Lord first bound the strong man before plundering his goods. The strong man is Satan.

Giving Authority to the Disciples to Deal with Satan and the Demons under Him

Luke 10:17-20 says that the demons were not only subject to the Lord Jesus; they were also subject to the disciples because the Lord Jesus gave this authority to the disciples.

Causing Satan to Have Nothing in Him

Satan was always spying on the Lord Jesus, working with all his heart and might; however, the Lord Jesus did not give Satan the slightest opportunity (John 14:30).

Destroying Satan through His Death on the Cross

See Hebrews 2:14.

Stripping Off All the Angels under Satan and Triumphing over Them

The Lord stripped off the rulers and authorities in the air, including all the angels under Satan, triumphing over them (Col. 2:15).

Capturing the Capturing Power of Satan

Satan, who captures people, has capturing power. But when the Lord Jesus gained the victory through death and resurrection, He captured the capturing power of Satan. Using today's terminology, we can say that He disarmed Satan. This is the meaning of Ephesians 4:8.

Being Far above All the Angels under Satan

In His ascension the Lord not only overcame all rule and authority, He was far above them (1:20-21).

Satan's Damaging Work on the Believers and the Church

Causing the Believers to Deceive the Holy Spirit

Satan causes the believers, like Ananias and Sapphira in the early days of the church (Acts 5:3), to deceive the Holy Spirit.

Sowing False Believers (Tares) into the Midst of True Believers

Satan sows unsaved, false believers into the midst of true believers (Matt. 13:38-39).

Putting Heresies into the Truth of Life

The woman spoken of in Matthew 13:33 refers to the Catholic Church. She takes leaven, which is all kinds of heresies, and puts it into the Lord Jesus' truth of life, leavening the whole lump.

Tempting the Believers

See 1 Thessalonians 3:5.

Sending False Apostles to Trouble the Believers

Second Corinthians 11:13-15 and Galatians 1:7 speak of false apostles as ministers of Satan.

Causing People to Preach Another Jesus,
Receive a Different Spirit,
and Accept a Different Gospel

Second Corinthians 11:3-4 speak of "another Jesus," a "different spirit," and a "different gospel," and Galatians 1:6 speaks of a "different gospel." This refers to the Judaizers mixing things of Judaism with the gospel of the Lord Jesus, causing people to be partly in Christianity and partly in Judaism, partly in grace and partly in the law, and partly relying on the Lord Jesus and partly relying on themselves. This is Satan's work of using Judaism to corrupt the gospel.

Causing People to Speak His Deep Things
and His Teachings in the Church

Based on Revelation 2:24 and 1 Timothy 4:1, we should never assume that only teachings of God are spoken in Christianity. Even in Christianity Satan works to cause people to speak his teachings, and not just ordinary teachings but also his deep things.

Causing People to Not Hold the Head, Christ,

but to Follow the Wisdom of the World in Self-imposed Worship, Even the Worship of the Angels

The main thought in Colossians 2:2-4, 8-9, and 16-23 relates to Satan using people to bring Greek wisdom into the church. The preaching of another Jesus spoken of earlier refers to Satan's corrupting work of using people to bring Judaism into the church and mixing it with the gospel. Here we are referring to Satan's causing people to not hold the Head, Christ, but to follow the wisdom of the world, bringing Greek wisdom, Greek philosophy, into the church. This philosophy includes matters of worshipping other deities and angels, and causing people to practice self-imposed worship, thus corrupting the church.

Causing People to Have an Outward Form of Godliness, though Denying Its Power

Second Timothy 3:5 refers to people who feign godliness.

Causing People to Kill the Believers and Think That They Are Offering Service to God

Satan stirred up the Judaizers to kill the believers and caused them to think that they were faithfully offering service to God. Then he instigated people in the Roman Catholic Church to do the same thing. History tells us that the Roman Catholic Church was more vicious in killing Christians than even the nation of Rome. Rome openly persecuted Christians but did not kill nearly as many Christians as the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church killed Christians and thought that she was serving God. This was Satan's work. The Lord Jesus clearly speaks of this matter in John 16:2.

Seeking to Devour the Believers as a Roaring Lion

See 1 Peter 5:8.

Bringing Afflictions to the Believers

Satan brings all kinds of afflictions to the believers (Rev. 2:10).

Sifting the Believers

In Luke 22:31 the Lord Jesus spoke of Satan sifting the believers as grains in a sieve; this is not easy to bear.

Buffeting the Believers

In 2 Corinthians 12:7 the apostle Paul speaks of a messenger of Satan buffeting him.

Accusing the Believers

Sometimes Satan accuses the believers before God, sometimes he accuses them in other believers, and sometimes he accuses the believers in themselves. This is indicated in Revelation 12:10.

Destroying the Believers' Flesh

The apostle Paul said that he had delivered an unrepentant sinner to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. Therefore, sometimes when we are troubled by physical illness, we might have committed a sin that we are unwilling to repent of, thus falling into Satan's hand to be destroyed by him. This is revealed in 1 Corinthians 5:5 and 1 Timothy 1:20.

Attacking the Believers with Stratagems

See Ephesians 6:11 and 2 Corinthians 2:11.

Ensnaring the Believers

See 1 Timothy 3:7.

Hindering the Lord's Workers

Another work of Satan is to hinder the Lord's workers. When God's workers, commissioned by God, go out to work, Satan raises up various environments to hinder them. This is revealed in 1 Thessalonians 2:18.

Causing the Lord's Workers to Love the Present Age and Abandon Their Co-workers

Demas was a worker of the Lord, but he loved the present age and abandoned Paul (2 Tim. 4:10). This also is Satan's work.

Causing the Churches to Be Lukewarm and Self-complacent

See Revelation 3:15-17.

Causing the Believers to Have Divisions and Producing Sects and Denominations to Damage the Church

See 1 Corinthians 1:11-12 and 3:3-4.

Causing the Believers to Be Carried About by Winds of Teaching, Not Holding Christ

In Christianity there are many doctrines and teachings that are pleasant to the ear but detached from Christ. Although the doctrines and teachings are neither bad nor wrong, they are like winds that toss people back and forth, preventing them from holding Christ, from learning to live in Christ, and from taking Christ as life. This is also a work of Satan that damages the believers.

Teaching in Ephesians 4:14-15 does not refer only to heretical teachings but even to good and correct teachings that cause people to not hold Christ; like the wind, they blow people away from Christ as life. This is a very insidious, damaging work of Satan.

Causing the Believers to Turn Away from the Apostles' Teaching

Paul says, "All who are in Asia turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15). This turning away from Paul mainly involved the rejection of his teaching. Most of the churches in Asia were established through the apostles' preaching of the

gospel; however, all the churches eventually rejected the apostles' teaching. As soon as the churches rejected the apostles' teaching, they began to walk in error. Second Timothy 1:15 and 4:16 speak very clearly about this matter.

Causing the Believers to Not Tolerate Healthy Teaching, but to Heap Up Many Teachers to Speak Words according to Their Own Lusts

This is the condition in today's Christianity. If we tell people in Christianity about Christ being our life and living in Christ, they feel that such topics are boring and uninteresting, much like the children of Israel who tired of eating manna in the wilderness. They want to hear things that are interesting, such as parables, stories, and jokes; they cannot tolerate healthy teaching. As a result, according to their own lusts, they hire many speakers to speak to them and to be their teachers. This is revealed in 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

Raising Up False Teachers to Speak Heretical Teachings among the Believers and Drawing Many to Follow Them, Supposing Godliness to Be a Means of Gain

See 2 Peter 2:1-3, 2 Timothy 2:17-18, and 1 Timothy 6:3-5.

Causing People to Preach beyond the Teaching of Christ and to Thus Become Antichrists

Those who preach beyond the teaching of Christ, that is, those who, in their teaching, deny the divinity of the Lord Jesus, the redemption of the blood of the Lord Jesus, and the resurrection of Christ are all antichrists. First John 2:19-20, 22; 4:3-6; and 2 John 7-10 all speak very clearly about this matter.

Causing People to Come into the Church as Fierce Wolves to Devastate the Believers

and to Draw Many to Follow Them

See Acts 20:29-30.

Causing People to Teach for Reward like Balaam and Persuading Some to Actually Hold Such Teaching

Balaam was a prophet of unrighteousness who preached for wages and taught for reward; moreover, some actually held this kind of teaching. This is recorded in 2 Peter 2:13-15, Jude 11-13, and Revelation 2:14.

Causing Fornication and Idolatry to Be Brought into the Church

In the Bible the word *fornication* includes two aspects: one aspect is fornication of the flesh, and the other aspect is spiritual fornication. For instance, the bringing of Gentile religions into Christianity by Roman Catholicism is a kind of spiritual fornication. Satan causes both the fornication of the flesh and the spirit and idolatry to be brought into the church. This is revealed in Revelation 2:20-25.

Causing Human Organization and the Clergy System to Be Brought into the Church

The fathers, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and the pope in Catholicism and the pastors, overseers, and bishops in Protestantism are examples of the clergy system. This kind of human organization should not be in the church of God. Among the children of God there should be the spiritual order in the Body but not the clergy system according to man. These things are also part of Satan's work (v. 15).

Causing the Church to Be in Union with the World and Lose Her Separation from the World

The church in Pergamos was fully in union with the world and lost her separation from the world. The church should be like a boat, which is on the sea but not of the sea; however, at the time of Pergamos, seawater came into

the boat. The result of the union of a boat and the sea is that seawater fills up the boat, and the boat sinks into the sea. The world fills up the church and causes the church to sink into the world. Originally, the church was set apart from the world by God, but Satan caused the church to go back to the world and be in union with the world, losing her separation from the world. See Revelation 2:12-13.

Causing the Church to Be Changed in Nature and Become the Mysterious Babylon the Great

The mysterious Babylon the Great spoken of in Revelation 17:1-6 refers partly to the Roman Catholic Church and partly to the Roman Empire. On the religious side, she is the Roman Catholic Church; on the political side, she is the Roman Empire (which includes the former Roman Empire and the Roman Empire that will be revived in the future). God sees the mysterious Babylon the Great as a great harlot because she has fully mixed religion with politics. This is Satan's work.

Satan not only caused the church to be changed in nature, becoming degraded Christianity, he also caused degraded Christianity to become part of the mysterious Babylon the Great. At this point we can say that Satan's corruption reached an irrecoverable state. This fulfilled the Lord Jesus' word in the Gospel of Matthew concerning the woman who took leaven and hid it in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened (13:33). The Roman Catholic Church has added many heresies into the truth of Christ as life and changed the nature of all the truths. Everything in the mysterious Babylon the Great is in confusion. What is of God and what is of the demons have become confused; what is of the Old Testament and what is of the New Testament have become confused; what is of the Gentiles and what is of the Jews have become confused; what is of the law and what is of grace have become confused; what is of the spirit and what is of the flesh have become confused; and what is of heresy and what is of truth also have become confused. Everything is in confusion.

Opposing the Church, Persecuting the Church, and Being Ready to Devour the People in the Church

The holy woman spoken of in Revelation 12:3-4, 13, and 17 signifies the church; the man-child signifies the overcomers in the church; and the red dragon signifies Satan. Satan comes to oppose the woman and her man-child, persecuting them and ready to devour them. On the one hand, Satan mixes with deformed Christianity to change the nature of the church; on the other hand, he opposes those who keep the nature of the church, persecuting them and devouring them.

The above thirty-four items are Satan's damaging work in the church and in the believers.

Satan's Defeat by the Believers and the Church

Although Satan has done some damage to the believers and the church, the believers and the church have victories over Satan as well.

The Lord Delivering the Believers out of the Authority of Satan

See Colossians 1:13 and Acts 26:18.

The Lord's Life Enabling the Believers, Who Were Begotten of God, to Overcome Satan and Keeping Them out of Satan's Touch

See 1 John 2:13-14 and 5:18.

The Lord Keeping the Believers out of the Hands of Satan, the Evil One

See Matthew 6:13, John 17:15, and 2 Thessalonians 3:3.

The Lord Giving Believers Authority to Tread upon Satan and over All His Power

See Luke 10:19 and Romans 16:20.

The Believers Overcoming Satan because of the Lord's Blood, the Word of Their Testimony, and Their Being Faithful unto Death

See Revelation 12:11.

The Believers Being Able to Cast Out Demons in the Lord's Name

See Mark 16:17.

The Believers Not Giving Any Place to the Devil

See Ephesians 4:27.

The Believers Being Aware of Satan's Schemes

See 2 Corinthians 2:11.

The Believers Being Sober and Watching, Withstanding Satan in Their Faith

See 1 Peter 5:8-9 and James 4:7.

The Believers Putting On the Armor of God, Standing against Satan, and Wrestling against Him

See Ephesians 6:11-20.

The Gates of Hades Not Prevailing against the Church

See Matthew 16:18.

The Overcomers in the Church

Casting Satan Down out of Heaven

In the future, before the great tribulation, after the overcomers are caught up to the heavens, they will cast Satan down out of heaven. This is revealed in Revelation 12:5 and 7-11.

Satan's Poisoning of the World

Deceiving the Whole Inhabited Earth

See Revelation 12:9 and 20:3.

Doing as He Pleases with the Whole World

The whole world lies in the evil one, being manipulated and abused by him; this is like a surgical patient on the operation table, lying in the hands of the surgeon, being operated on by him as he wishes. See 1 John 5:19.

Being the God of the World

and Blinding the Thoughts of the Unbelievers

See 2 Corinthians 4:4.

Causing People to Worship Him through Idols

Satan is behind all the idols. All idol worship is the worship of Satan. See Revelation 9:20 and 1 Corinthians 10:20 and compare with Matthew 4:9.

Causing People to Become His Children

with His Sinful Life and Evil Nature

The Bible clearly says that those who practice sin are the children of the devil. The Lord Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). The devil's sinful life and evil nature are in his children. This is clearly spoken of in 1 John 3:8, John 8:44, and Matthew 23:33.

Causing People to Practice Sin

Satan's most prevailing strategy against man is to cause him to practice sin. In today's dazzling world of sensual pleasures, everything that man does is sin. This is Satan's work. See 1 John 3:8.

Snatching the Word Away from the Heart of Men

See Matthew 13:19.

Causing People to Pervert the Ways of the Lord

See Acts 13:10.

Snaring and Catching People Alive

See 2 Timothy 2:26.

Binding People

Satan binds people with illnesses, demons, the environment, riches, position, fame, and knowledge. See Luke 13:16.

Possessing People

See Mark 5:2.

Bringing Afflictions to the World

The afflictions that are brought to the whole world include wars, natural disasters, man-made calamities, and all kinds of diseases. Revelation 12:12 says, "Woe to the earth and the sea because the devil has come down to you and has great rage, knowing that he has only a short time." When Satan is cast down, great tribulation will begin on the earth; Satan will do all that he can to bring afflictions to the world. His heart delights in the hardships and the sufferings of man. Whereas God loves man, Satan does evil toward man.

Deceiving the Nations to War against God

Revelation 20:3 says that when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be loosed for a little time. His final work will be to deceive the nations of that age to war against God.

Satan's Six Great Undertakings in the Universe

Satan has done much work in the universe. Of these works, six are quite important, and every Christian should memorize them. After these six great tasks Satan's destiny will come to an end.

Rebelling

See Isaiah 14:13-14.

Stealing Away the First Adam

See Genesis 3:1-4.

Tempting the Last Adam

See Matthew 4:1-11.

Killing the Righteous One (the Lord Jesus)

See Acts 3:15 and 7:52.

Being Incarnated as the Antichrist

The Bible shows us that one day Satan will also become flesh to be the Antichrist. The coming Antichrist will be the embodiment of Satan, just as Christ is the embodiment of God. As Christ is the proper mingling of God and man, Antichrist will be the illegitimate mixture of Satan and man. See Revelation 12:9-12; 13:2; and 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9.

Deceiving at the End of the Millennium

See Revelation 20:7-10.

Satan's Judgment

Being Cast Out from the Holy Mountain of God

Satan was originally God's anointed cherub, who stood before God upon the holy mountain where God dwelt. When he rebelled against God because of his pride, he was cast out by God from the holy mountain. This is recorded in Ezekiel 28:16-17.

Being Judged and Destroyed by the Lord on the Cross

On the cross the Lord not only bore man's sins, He also destroyed Satan. Through death the Lord Jesus destroyed the devil, who has the might of death. See Hebrews 2:14, John 12:31, and 16:11.

Being Cast Down to the Earth

As soon as the overcomers are caught up to heaven, Satan will be cast down from heaven to the earth. See Revelation 12:8-10 and 13.

Being Bound and Cast into the Abyss for One Thousand Years

See Revelation 20:1-3 and compare with Isaiah 14:15.

Being Cast into the Lake of Fire

See Revelation 20:10. The ultimate end of Satan will be to be cast into the lake of fire.