

*C*RYSTALLIZATION-
STUDY
of
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SONGS

W I T N E S S L E E

LIVING
STREAM
MINISTRY

CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OF SONG OF SONGS

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ISBN: 978-0-87083-993-1

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PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee in the winter training in Anaheim, California, on December 21 through 27, 1995.

CHAPTER ONE

PURSUING CHRIST FOR SATISFACTION

Scripture Reading: S. S. 1:2-4a

OUTLINE

- I. Attracted by Christ's love—S. S. 1:2:
 - A. Christ's love is more cheering than wine.
 - B. Nothing is so cheering as Christ's love.
 - C. His lover yearns for a direct kiss by Him with His mouth in His unrivaled love.
- II. Charmed by Christ's name—v. 3:
 - A. Christ in His resurrection became the compounded Spirit (Exo. 30:23-30), who is compounded with olive oil, signifying the Spirit of the Triune God, and with:
 - 1. Myrrh, signifying Christ's sweet death.
 - 2. Cinnamon, signifying the sweet effectiveness of Christ's death.
 - 3. Calame's, signifying Christ's life-dispensing resurrection.
 - 4. Cassia, signifying the power of Christ's resurrection.
 - B. The name of such a consummated, all-inclusive, and life-giving Spirit sanctifies all the people and the things related to God's move.
 - C. Such a name is fragrant and more charming than everything else.
- III. Captivated by Christ's person—v. 4a:
 - A. He has drawn and captivated millions of His lovers to pursue after Him and is still doing the same today.
 - B. Therefore, all His lovers would run after Him for their satisfaction.

This series of messages covers the living of a Christ-seeker as depicted in Song of Songs. Such a living is expressed in the following stages of the seeker's experience:

(1) Attracted by Christ's love, charmed by His name, and captivated by His person to pursue Him and be led into the church life.

(2) Called to remain in the cross that she may be freed from her introspective self for the fulfilling of her Beloved's purpose concerning her in the divine life.

(3) Called to live in ascension and even within the veil to experience the stronger cross that she may be one with God in her spirit even before rapture.

(4) Conformed, ultimately, to be the wonderful Shulammite, who, as the duplication of Solomon, is the greatest and ultimate figure of the New Jerusalem as the counterpart of Christ.

We have interpreted nearly every sign in Song of Songs in the life-study of this book (see *Life-study of Song of Songs*). Now we have the burden to help all of us, through God's mercy, apply what we have seen. In our application we will cover only the first six chapters of Song of Songs. I believe that after we pick up the way to apply this interpreted book, we will be able to see for ourselves the "crystals" in the last two chapters.

MAN BEING CREATED WITH A SEEKING HEART FOR GOD

The first "crystal" in this book is to pursue Christ for satisfaction. God created us for the accomplishment of His eternal economy in His own image with the intention that we could become Him in life and nature but not in the Godhead. For this purpose He created us with a spirit to receive Him. Many people do not realize that God also created us with a seeking heart for Himself so that He could be our satisfaction.

Man fell away from God, and sin through Satan came in to frustrate man from receiving God for his satisfaction. Yet the desire for God, the seeking for God, still remains in man's heart. History tells us that over the past six thousand years many wise, great, philosophical, and thoughtful men have given the same testimony that nothing can fully satisfy man. Regardless of what they could get from the world, what they could attain, or what they could obtain, nothing can satisfy them because within them there is a seeking heart for God (Eccl. 3:11). This is why the wise King Solomon, after his many human experiences, concluded, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (1:2). Everything under the sun is vanity of vanities if one does not have God. God purposely created within man a desire for Himself. The monks in Buddhism

and the nuns in Catholicism have this desire, but they do not have the proper understanding of how to seek God. God has given man a heart that is seeking after Him for satisfaction.

PURSUING CHRIST

Song of Songs is a book in the Bible that tells us how we can be properly satisfied with God. There is no other way except by pursuing after Christ, because Christ is the very embodiment of the Triune God. He is the reality of God. He is God in reality, God's embodiment, coming to earth to give people the opportunity to receive Him for satisfaction.

Peter may be counted as the first one among the apostles, and Paul was a later one. They were seekers of God, but initially, they took the wrong way. Eventually, both Peter, a fisherman, and Paul, a learned scholar, found the way to seek Christ for satisfaction. Paul tells us in Philippians 3 that we have to pursue Christ to gain Him (vv. 12-14) because He is the most excellent way. All things other than Christ are dung (v. 8). Only Christ is excellent. Whatever we obtain or have obtained other than Christ is vanity. Paul says that it is dung. Do you like dung? But today many worldly people are gaining dung day after day. Dung is their food. Solomon says that they are pursuing vanity. Vanity of vanities is what they are eating. That is their food. Paul's desire was to gain Christ, and he instructs us how to gain Christ as he did.

In this chapter our point is that we have to pursue Christ for satisfaction. Song of Songs opens in this way: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!" (1:2a). The seeker longs for kisses, not just one kiss. The most impressive thing about weddings in the Western world is the time of kissing. The bridegroom opens the bride's veil to kiss her with his own mouth. He does not kiss the ears or the nose of the bride but her mouth. This is the most personal and affectionate thing. Here is a book in the Bible that opens in such a way: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!" This is what it means to pursue Christ.

According to the New Testament, God's ordained way for man to receive Him in this kind of personal and affectionate way is first to believe in Him. To believe in Him is to receive Him as the divine life into us so that we may have an organic union with God in the divine life. Regretfully, very few Christians know what believing in Christ means. They know that they need to take Him

as their Savior and Redeemer, but they do not know that to believe in Christ is to receive Him as the divine life into us so that we can have an organic union with God in His divine life. This is the first step.

Now that we have received Christ into us, what does God want us to do? Many Christian teachers teach people in the wrong way. They say that after one has believed in Christ, he should do many things. This is wrong. According to the New Testament, after we believe in Christ, after we receive Him as the divine life into us, we have to love Him (see 1 Cor. 2:9 and footnote 3, Recovery Version). Paul says that the Lord's grace superabounded to him with faith and love in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 1:14). Faith is to receive Christ, and love is to pursue Christ.

“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!” This word indicates that to some extent the seeker has obtained a part of Christ's love, but now she wants something more intimate. She wants to be kissed not just with one kiss but with the kisses of His mouth. Someone who is affectionate with another may kiss him on the cheek, but this expression of affection is not the first category of love. On the wedding day who would want to see the bridegroom kiss his bride on the cheek? He is expected to kiss his bride on the mouth as the expression of his utmost affection.

In her desire to be kissed with the kisses of His mouth, the seeker goes on to say, “Your love is better than wine” (S. S. 1:2b). She does not say that His love is as good as wine but that it is better than wine. Wine cheers, but Christ's love cheers us in an unrivaled way. No wine can compare with His unrivaled love. Nothing is so cheering as Christ's love.

Verse 3 says, “Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; / Your name is like ointment poured forth; / Therefore the virgins love you.” Christ's name signifies Christ's person, His being, and Christ is the compound Spirit signified by the anointing ointment in Exodus 30. “The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45b). This indicates that Christ's name as His person is the anointing ointment. An ointment is always a compound. Christ is compounded with God, with man, with His death, with the effectiveness of His death, with His resurrection, and with the power of His resurrection. At least these six things are compounded together to be the anointing ointment, signifying Christ in His resurrection as the compound Spirit. If someone says

your name, you respond because you are the person of that name. Christ's charming name, His person, is the all-inclusive compound Spirit.

His love is attracting, His name is charming, and His person is captivating. He has drawn and captivated millions of His lovers to pursue after Him and is still doing the same today. Therefore, all His lovers would run after Him for their satisfaction. This is why the seeker prays, "Draw me; we will run after you" (S. S. 1:4a).

THE NEED FOR A PERSONAL AND AFFECTIONATE RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

Dear saints, in this chapter I want to impress you with something particular. After you have received Christ as your life, you must have a very personal seeking after Christ. No one can represent you or do anything for you in this matter. It must be personal. Every believer's relationship with Christ must be personal and affectionate.

God works in a personal and affectionate way, not in the way of a movement. Mao Tse-tung gained the people of China by a movement, not by personal contact and affection. Even many in Christianity like to use the term *movement*. Some say that at John Wesley's time in Oxford there was a movement. They also say that there was a great movement, a great revival, in Wales at the beginning of this century. This concept of having a movement is wrong. We do not want to have a movement in the Lord's recovery. A person can be moved to join a movement and not have any personal contact with the Lord. Recently, we have stressed that God became a man that man may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead. Although many responded to this truth, I was not very happy, because this response was a movement. In order to practice such a high truth, we need the personal and affectionate experience of Christ.

Since we have been born of God, we have become His children (John 1:12-13). John 3:6 says, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Since God is Spirit and we were born of Him, what are we? That which is born of a cow is a cow. That which is born of Chinese is Chinese. Also, that which is born of God as the Spirit is spirit. This is logical. A paraphrased version of John 3:6

could read this way: “He who is born of God the Spirit is the spirit-God.” We were regenerated of God as the Spirit to be a spirit. As those who have been born of God, we are the children of God, the same as God in life and nature but not in the Godhead. Therefore, our relationship with God has to be personal and affectionate.

In these days I feel very much that there is a warm, intimate, close affection between me and my God. The seeker said, “Draw me.” She did not say, “Draw us.” *Draw me* is personal. We want a drawing from the Lord that is His personal and affectionate doing. We want Him to be with us in a personal and affectionate way. All the religions, including Christianity, present a portrait of God that is inaccurate. They portray God merely as great, almighty, sovereign, majestic, and even unapproachable; no one can or even dares to touch God. To say that God is majestic is not wrong, but that is only one attribute of the Divine Being. Regardless of how great, sovereign, almighty, and majestic God is, when He wanted to build up His relationship with man, He took the personal, affectionate way. He took the way of becoming a man. If the Lord Jesus had come to Peter in a majestic way, Peter would have felt threatened. But He did not come to Peter as the majestic, untouchable God. Instead, He came to Peter as his countryman. Peter was a Galilean, and Jesus was also a Galilean. This is personal and affectionate.

The Lord Jesus lived among men for thirty-three and a half years. This was the way in which God came to build up His relationship with man. This is the personal, affectionate way recorded in the New Testament from the incarnation to the day of resurrection. On the morning of His resurrection the Lord’s empty tomb was discovered by three sisters (Mark 16:1, 8). When they entered into the tomb, an angel gave them a message from the Lord, saying, “Go, tell His disciples and Peter” (v. 7). Peter’s name mentioned in this way is personal and affectionate. Peter’s intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus was particular, so it was stressed even by the angel. At the beginning of his contact with the Lord, Peter’s response was not too personal, but gradually, Peter’s transaction with the Lord became personal and affectionate.

The apostle John could recline on the Lord’s bosom (John 13:23). How personal and affectionate that was! The very God, the very Lord whom we seek, sets up a feast and invites us to feast with Him (Rev. 3:20). We must have such a personal and affectionate contact with Him. If we mail someone a

letter, that affects him in a certain way. But if we come to him with a personal visitation and an affectionate contact, that makes a great difference.

Hymns, #437 (stanzas 1 and 6 with the chorus) says,

Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him?

Is not thine a captured heart?

Chief among ten thousand own Him;

Joyful choose the better part.

Captivated by His beauty,

Worthy tribute haste to bring;

Let His peerless worth constrain thee,

Crown Him now unrivaled King.

'Tis that look that melted Peter,

'Tis that face that Stephen saw,

'Tis that heart that wept with Mary,

Can alone from idols draw:

Only the face of tears that Peter saw, only the face of glory into which Stephen looked, and only the heart that wept with Mary can keep us away from the idols, the attractions, of this world. The Bible tells us that Jesus wept with Mary (John 11:35). Have you ever heard that God weeps? Many say that Jesus came to express God, but they mainly refer to the miracles that He did, not to the tears that He shed.

Dear saints, my burden in this chapter is to share that you have to start seeking the Lord in a personal and affectionate way. I want to stress these two words: *personal* and *affectionate*. The very God whom we pursue is personal and affectionate.

I have been in the Lord's fellowship for about seventy years, but there was one particular occasion when the Lord touched me in the most personal and affectionate way. In 1943 Japan invaded and occupied China. One day the military police of the invading Japanese army arrested me and imprisoned me for thirty days. Every day I was subjected to two very stern and strict examinations. At that time the Chinese knew how cruel the invading Japanese army was. They would kill a Chinese as they would a chicken. I do not believe

that there were many Chinese who were arrested by the Japanese army and released after thirty days. All my relatives, friends, and brothers and sisters in the church were very concerned for my life.

On the first day of my imprisonment, the Japanese military police put me into a soldier's bedroom; that night the Lord gave me a dream, indicating to me that the Japanese army would not hurt me. The next day they began to interrogate me. They threatened to pour cold water upon me if I did not tell the truth. I said to myself, "You don't need to threaten me, because I will surely speak the truth. I am a man of truth." After many times of their testing, they could not find anything wrong with me. After fifteen days of being imprisoned, I was alone in my small cell in the night. I stood up and I can testify that the Lord was in my presence embracing me. I said with tears, "Lord, You know why I am here." This experience of the Lord was personal to the uttermost. In my whole life I never had a time like that in which the Lord was so personal to me. I was so personal and affectionate to Him, and He was the same to me.

We all need this kind of personal, affectionate, intimate contact with the Lord every day. This has become my habit. Every morning after rising up I go to my desk, and the first thing I say is, "Lord Jesus, I love You." I am not just a poor man praying to a merciful God, but I am contacting a Savior who is personal and affectionate to me, as I am personal and affectionate to Him. We all need to take heed to what the seeker says: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!" Right away her tone changes: "Your love is better than wine." This is a personal, intimate prayer. "Draw me; we will run after you." This is personal and affectionate. We need this kind of personal and affectionate seeking after Him, and we need to build up such a relationship with Him that is so personal and affectionate.

CHAPTER TWO
FELLOWSHIPING
IN THE INNER CHAMBERS OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: S. S. 1:4b-8

OUTLINE

- I. The inner chambers of Christ—S. S. 1:4b:
 - A. His lovers' regenerated spirits mingled with and indwelt by Him as the life-dispensing Spirit—Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:11.
 - B. The practical Holy of Holies in Christ's lovers for their participation in and enjoyment of the pneumatic Christ as the consummated Triune God—Heb. 4:16.
- II. The fellowship in the mingled spirit of Christ's lovers—2 Cor. 13:14; Rom. 8:4b:
 - A. In the joy of Christ's lover with her companions, extolling His unrivaled love—S. S. 1:4c.
 - B. Enlightened to see that she is sinful in Adam but justified in Christ—vv. 5-6a.
 - C. Receiving the revelation on how to enter the church life—vv. 7-8:
 - 1. Realizing that she was separated from Christ's flock by the denominational people and that she needs Christ's feeding and rest with satisfaction—vv. 6b-7; John 10:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2.
 - 2. Instructed by Christ that she should leave where she was kept away from the church and go forth on the footsteps of the flock—S. S. 1:8a:
 - a. The flock is the church in the proper sense according to the apostles' teaching in the New Testament.
 - b. The footsteps of the flock have laid a line showing us the proper way to follow the Lord in His recovery.
 - c. The church is the place where Christ pastures, shepherds and feeds, His saints.
 - d. Christ charges her to pasture, shepherd and feed, her spiritual children in the churches (shepherds' tents)—v. 8b.

3. Though the lover of Christ is seeking after Christ for her own satisfaction and rest, Christ, in answering her request and instructing her how to seek after Him, charges her to take care of her spiritual children, the members of the Body of Christ.
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In the first chapter we stressed two words: *personal* and *affectionate*. In saving us and in building up a relationship with us, God came to visit us personally and affectionately. How personal and affectionate Jesus was in the Gospels! But this was His visitation to His chosen people in the physical life. He was a man physically but was not yet the Spirit.

One day He told His disciples of His intention to die. They could not understand this. They thought that He had come to build up the kingdom of God and that they would be with Him on the throne. James and John wanted to sit at His right and left in His kingdom. When the other ten heard this, they were indignant, showing that they also were ambitious to be with the Lord on the throne (Matt. 20:20-28). They were in the physical realm.

Through His death and in His resurrection He became “another kind of Jesus.” He was no longer physical, because He became a life-giving Christ, a life-giving Spirit. The last Adam, who was Jesus in the flesh, became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). I would like to ask, “Are you still preaching and ministering a physical Jesus or a pneumatic Christ?” Mostly, those in Christianity preach a physical Savior, but the Bible unveils to us that this physical Savior, after He accomplished God’s full redemption through His death, changed into a life-giving Spirit in resurrection. They do not believe that Christ has become another kind of person, not physical but spiritual.

When Christ was in the flesh, He could visit His disciples outwardly and openly, but there was no possibility for Him to visit His disciples inwardly and privately. Today Christ visits us privately and spiritually because He is the life-giving, compound, consummated, all-inclusive Spirit. He is the Spirit as the consummation of the processed and consummated Triune God, so He visits people secretly, privately, not openly.

THE KING, CHRIST, BRINGING US INTO HIS INNER CHAMBERS,

OUR REGENERATED SPIRIT

First, in Song of Songs the Lord captivates His seeker, and she with all her companions follow Him. To pursue Christ for satisfaction is the first “crystal” in Song of Songs. The second crystal is the King bringing His seeker into His inner chambers. Song of Songs is a book of figures. In a figure of speech the king’s inner chambers signify our regenerated spirit as Christ’s inner chambers.

God created man so that man may become Him by His being received by man so that He can enter into and stay in man. For this reason God created us with a spirit. According to the New Testament teaching, our regenerated spirit is not only for us to have a means to receive Him but also for us to contain Him. Second Timothy 4:22 says, “The Lord be with your spirit.” Ephesians 3:16 says that we need to be strengthened into our inner man. The inner man is our regenerated spirit. Ephesians 2:22 shows that our spirit is a habitation, a dwelling place, to God. The real inner chambers to God are our spirit.

Regretfully, the majority of Christians in today’s Christianity do not believe that there is such a thing as the human spirit. They say that the human spirit is synonymous with man’s soul or heart. The Chinese translation of the Bible mixes up the heart, the soul, and the spirit by using the terms *spirit-soul* or *heart-spirit*. Not many Christians today know definitely that they have a spirit. When I came to the United States in the early 1960s, I began to teach concerning the human spirit. Many told me that before I taught this, they never knew that they had a spirit.

There are three verses in the New Testament that show the divine Spirit and the regenerated human spirit. John 4:24 says, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit.” In this verse are God the Spirit and our spirit, with which we worship God the Spirit. John 3:6 says, “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Romans 8:16 says, “The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.” I came to the United States with a burden to release all the high-peak truths. One among these is the human spirit. Another is that Christ, as the last Adam, became a life-giving Spirit. Christ as the life-giving Spirit dwells in our human spirit, and these two spirits are mingled together to be one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17).

In this chapter we want to stress the words *private* and *spiritual*. Christianity preaches the physical Jesus, but we preach the pneumatic Christ, the Christ who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). This One is private and spiritual. We have seen that the king's chambers signify our spirit. He visits us in our spirit privately, and He comes to us in a spiritual way, not a physical way. He visits us privately as the all-inclusive consummated Spirit.

Christ the King brings His seekers into His chambers, that is, into their regenerated spirit, His dwelling place. Let us consider the application of this. When I was young, I was taught to pray to God as the heavenly Father. I was also told not to pray to the Spirit, because in the entire New Testament you cannot find a verse concerning praying to the Spirit. But the more we pray, the more we have the feeling that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all in us (Eph. 4:6; 2 Cor. 13:5; Rom. 8:9). According to our experience, our spirit is the Holy of Holies—the dwelling place, the inner chambers, of the Triune God. In this first chapter of Song of Songs He and we have the private and affectionate fellowship.

The seeker in Song of Songs prayed, “Draw me; we will run after you” (1:4a). Then the king drew her and she followed, but she did not know where to go. The King knows where to go. We must go to our spirit. The inner chambers of Christ are His lovers' regenerated spirits mingled with and indwelt by Him as the life-dispensing Spirit (Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:11) and are the practical Holy of Holies in Christ's lovers for their participation in and enjoyment of the pneumatic Christ as the consummated Triune God (Heb. 4:16).

After we were saved, we began to pray, and eventually, we realized that the heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus, and the Spirit are all in us. But at that time we did not know in what part of our being the Triune God dwelt. We did not know that we had a human spirit, but gradually we found out that the Triune God dwells in our regenerated spirit. The seeker followed the Lord, and He immediately brought her to her regenerated spirit to have fellowship with Him.

SINFUL IN ADAM BUT JUSTIFIED IN CHRIST

Song of Songs 1:4b-8 shows the fellowship in the mingled spirit of Christ's lovers (2 Cor. 13:14; Rom. 8:4b). This fellowship is in the joy of Christ's lover with her companions, in their extolling His unrivaled love (S. S. 1:4c). She and her companions extol the Lord's love, but this seeker stands out. She says, "I am black but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, / Like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon" (v. 5). Kedar is a place in Arabia. The black tents of Kedar were dried up by the sun, but the lovely curtains of Solomon were within the king's home. She was black because of the scorching sun: "Do not look at me, because I am black, / Because the sun has scorched me" (v. 6a). In her fellowship with the Lord, she was enlightened to see that she was a sinner in Adam (black) but that she has been justified in Christ (lovely). She stands out among her companions as one who is pleasant to God and man. She wants the Lord Himself, whereas the others are satisfied in a general way. She was enlightened to see that although she is sinful in Adam, she is beautiful in Christ in the eyes of God.

RECEIVING THE REVELATION CONCERNING HOW TO ENTER THE CHURCH LIFE

Then the seeker said, "My mother's sons were angry with me; / They made me keeper of the vineyards, / But my own vineyard I have not kept. / Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock? / Where do you make it lie down at noon? / For why should I be like one who is veiled / Beside the flocks of your companions?" (vv. 6b-7). *My mother's sons* signifies the denominational brothers who persecute the seeking one. Noon is the time when the sun is at its highest, a scorching time. The seeker wanted to know where the Lord makes His flock lie down at noon. At the time of hardships she needs someone to shepherd her. She was telling the Lord, "Lord, I want to have You. I don't want to miss You. I want to enjoy Your presence. Bring me to where You shepherd Your flock at noon so that I can be under Your shelter to have rest and satisfaction." Christ's presence has two issues. If you have Christ's presence, you have Christ's rest and satisfaction.

The seeker received the revelation concerning how to enter the church life. The seeker realized that she was separated from Christ's flock by the denominational people and that she needed Christ's feeding and rest with satisfaction (vv. 6b-7; John 10:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). Christ led us into

our spirit, and in our spirit, in fellowship with Him, He directed us to the church life. She was instructed by Christ to leave the place where she was kept away from the church and go forth on the footsteps of the flock (S. S. 1:8a). The flock is the church in the proper sense according to the apostles' teaching in the New Testament. The footsteps of the flock have laid a line showing us the proper way to follow the Lord in His recovery.

In the Lord's care for His seeker, the Lord was very wise. She was seeking after the Lord for her own satisfaction. That was her concern. But the Lord's concern with His saved sinners is not just for their satisfaction but for God's eternal economy. Thus, the concerns are different. Our concern is very low, personal, but the Lord's concern is God's economy. God's economy is to save sinners to gain the churches, so that the essence of these churches can become the organic Body of Christ for the consummation of the New Jerusalem. The Lord's intention in saving us is for us to be in the church so that we can be built up in the Body of Christ and be in the consummation of God's economy, the New Jerusalem.

Many do not even like to talk about the church because of all the complications and confusion with the denominations. The seeker says that her mother's sons were angry with her. The mother signifies grace as the one who begot the seeker and her brothers (cf. Gal. 4:26). Her brothers born of the same grace persecuted her and pressed her to work in the vineyards while she neglected her own vineyard. Song of Songs 1:7 speaks of the flocks of the Lord's companions. These flocks turn the seeker away from the Lord's presence. As a result, the seeker says to the Lord, "Where do you pasture your flock? / Where do you make it lie down at noon?" The companions are the Lord's companions, but their flocks are not His flock. Their flocks carried the seeker away from Christ Himself and from His feeding and shepherding.

All the founders of the denominations are Christ's companions, His friends. But the so-called churches set up by them are not the church in the proper sense according to the apostles' teaching in the New Testament. Many missionaries who went to China were the genuine companions of Christ, but they set up their own denominations. Hudson Taylor established the church of the China Inland Mission. A. B. Simpson established churches of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. They were Christ's companions who went out for Christ but not to set up the churches of Christ. They were very good with respect to Christ, but they did something wrong with respect to the

church life, because they set up their own flocks. Such companions of the Lord were positive, but unintentionally they established flocks that separated Christ's real seekers from His presence with His shepherding and feeding.

Today there are many so-called churches, but to what extent are they really for Christ? The Catholic Church is condemned by Christ Himself. He called the Catholic Church "the great harlot" (Rev. 17:1). But even that Catholic Church who is a great harlot has brought some to the Lord. People were saved through them. Among the Catholics there are a good number of nuns who are very devoted. All the so-called Christian churches built up by Christ's companions bring people to Christ but only to a certain extent. Some bring people to Christ to a very small extent. Others bring people to Christ to a great extent, like A. B. Simpson's churches. Although they were very spiritual, they were still not up to the Lord's standard according to the apostles' teaching in the New Testament.

Our experience was that the more we stayed in the denominations, the more we lost the Lord's presence. We left the denominations because we lost the presence of Christ. In the hardships, at noontime, we did not enjoy the shepherding of Christ. Christ was not with us, so we did not have rest and satisfaction. One day we met the Lord's recovery and found out that, although it was not perfect, it was the highest place. The church is the place where Christ pastures, shepherds and feeds, His saints. We left the denominations because we had no rest, no satisfaction, and no real enjoyment of Christ. We may have been saved in a denomination, and that denomination may have helped us, taught us, and built us up to know Christ to a certain extent, but it was also that denomination that hindered us from going on to enjoy Christ with His rest and satisfaction. In today's confusion of the divisions in Christianity, we should realize where to go. All of the Lord's seekers should follow the footsteps of His flock.

The Lord instructed His seeker to follow the footsteps of the flock, which are the footsteps of all the faithful Christ-seekers throughout the centuries. After I decided to serve the Lord with my full time, I went to Shanghai to stay with Brother Nee, and he received me as his guest for four and a half months. At that time we did not have much work to do, so I went to him like a student to a professor. He took the chance to perfect me, to tell me the stories of the history of the church with the Lord's seekers beginning from the church

fathers and going on throughout the centuries. From those footsteps we found out the way to follow Christ.

The Lord also told the seeker to pasture her young goats by the shepherds' tents (S. S. 1:8b). The shepherds here, of course, are the positive ones. In Christ's proper church life there are shepherds helping others to know Christ, to enjoy Christ, and to receive the rest and satisfaction from Christ to the highest extent. The Lord charged His seeker not only to be in the place where He shepherds His flock but also to bring her small spiritual children to the shepherds' tents, the dwelling place of the Lord's shepherds, where they shepherd others to know Him. These tents are the churches in the proper sense. We must have our spiritual children stay in the places where these shepherds are; this is the best blessing to our children. Though the lover of Christ is seeking after Christ for her own satisfaction and rest, Christ, in answering her request and instructing her how to seek after Him, charges her to take care of her spiritual children, the members of the Body of Christ.

THE PHYSICAL WORLD AND THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

We also need to see that in the whole universe there are two kinds of worlds. One is the old world, the physical world. This evil world started from Cain. It developed into a kingdom with Nimrod in Genesis 10. Eventually, Egypt became a world power, and the children of Abraham lived there for more than four hundred years. Then Israel was brought into Canaan, and God charged them to destroy all the Canaanites. They did not carry this out absolutely, and eventually they themselves were brought into captivity, first by Assyria, then by Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. These are the kingdoms that controlled Israel for the past centuries. Today there is still a quarrel among the nations of the world concerning the land of Israel.

Those in the physical world do not know that on this earth there is another world being built up by God. This is the spiritual world. When we were saved, we were brought into another world. We were in the evil world of Satan, but Christ saved us and transferred us from that world to another world, from the kingdom of the world to the kingdom of God. In this world everything is spiritual. Today those in the United Nations know only the evil world, which is built up by Satan mingled with the fallen life of man. In one sense we are in

this world, but in another sense we are not in it. We are in the spirit to build up the spiritual world.

When the Lord Jesus came to man, He came to the fallen world, so He came with a body as a physical person. He Himself was under the Roman Empire and was even sentenced to death and executed by the Roman Empire. Today this evil world knows only the physical Jesus. They do not know the very Christ whom we know today. The Christ whom we know today is the pneumatic Christ.

When I was at the end of my teenage years, the Lord regenerated me, and something new within me started. That was God's new creation. In this universe two worlds are building up themselves. One is the evil world built up by Satan mingled with the fallen people. The other is the spiritual world, which is called by the New Testament the new creation. The building up of the new creation is going on with Christ as the Spirit and with us. Whatever is going on and whatever is done in the new creation is private and spiritual.

My classmates saw me change after I was regenerated, but they did not know what happened. In the spiritual world many unseen things take place in and with us that no one in the physical world can understand. We must realize that in the universe two worlds are going on. The first evil world will go to the lake of fire. Everything in the physical world from Cain through Nimrod and through Antichrist will be burned in the lake of fire. But we will be consummated in the city of water, not the lake of fire. This city of water is the New Jerusalem. Actually, the upcoming New Jerusalem will be our consummation.

First, God saves us; then the Lord leads us to know how to contact Him in our spirit privately and spiritually. Because we want to enjoy His rich presence with His rest and satisfaction, He tells us clearly that He is only with His flock, the church. The essence of the church is the organic Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem. After we were saved, our concern was merely for our satisfaction, but Christ's concern is God's satisfaction—to have His eternal economy accomplished by having us as the members of the church, the essence of which is the organic Body of Christ, which ultimately consummates in the New Jerusalem. We have to learn to say that our concern is God's concern for the church, for the Body of Christ, and for the New Jerusalem.

What I am doing is building the New Jerusalem and will be consummated in the New Jerusalem. My concern is not soul-winning, nor is it just for us to have satisfaction. My concern is for others to be brought into the church life through Christ's private, spiritual fellowship. When we fellowship with Christ privately and spiritually, He will direct our feet to go forth on the footsteps of the flock. Then we will be in the church for the Body of Christ and for the consummation of the New Jerusalem.

CHAPTER THREE

TRANSFORMED AND PERFECTED IN THE CHURCH LIFE

Scripture Reading: S. S. 1:9-11, 15; 2:1-2

OUTLINE

- I. Transformed by the transforming Spirit in the church life—S. S. 1:9-10, 15; 2:1-2:
 - A. The lover of Christ is likened by Christ to a mare—1:9:
 - 1. Natural with a strong character.
 - 2. Living in the satanic cosmos (Egypt).
 - 3. Enslaved by Satan (among Pharaoh's chariots).
 - B. Transformed into:
 - 1. A lily—2:1b-2:
 - a. Living a life trusting in God, not in her natural strength.
 - b. Looking unto God with a single eye (eyes of doves), implying that she must also be a dove looking to God by focusing her eyes on one single goal—1:15b.
 - c. Living among the filthy and unbelieving people (thorns)—2:2.
 - d. Considered by herself a lowly and small person living in the low place (valleys)—v. 1b.
 - 2. A rose—considered by herself something common among the people (Sharon)—v. 1a.
 - C. Praised and enjoyed by Christ in her loveliness in—1:10:
 - 1. Her submission to God through the transformation of the Spirit with the divine nature of God (plaits of gold) as ornaments in her expression (cheeks).
 - 2. Her obedience to God through the dispensing of the transforming Spirit with the divine life expressed as jewels in strings.
- II. Perfected by the perfected saints in the church life—v. 11:
 - A. The perfected saints cooperate together with the transforming Spirit to perfect the lover of Christ in (Eph. 4:12):
 - 1. Her submission to God with the divine life.

2. The constitution of her growth in the divine life with the all-inclusive redemption of Christ:
 - a. His all-terminating and life-releasing death.
 - b. His all-germinating and life-dispensing resurrection.
 - c. His all-transcending and all-attaining ascension.
 - B. For the building up of the Body of Christ in the maturity of the lovers of Christ for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God.
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THE NEED FOR TRANSFORMATION

In this chapter we come to a point that is greatly missed and neglected by today's Christianity. This point is transformation. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind." Then 2 Corinthians 3:18 says that we are to be transformed into the image of the glory of Christ by the Lord Spirit. The One who transforms us is the Lord Spirit, the very God who is today the Spirit. *The Lord Spirit* is a compound divine title like *the Father God*.

When I came to the United States, my burden was with three main items. The first item was the all-inclusive Christ. The first conference of the Lord's recovery in the United States was on the all-inclusive Christ, based upon three verses from Deuteronomy 8 (vv. 7-9). Eventually, I told people that this all-inclusive Christ is today the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). The second item with which I had a heavy burden to tell God's elect was the truth concerning the human spirit. The third item was transformation.

I spoke on the all-inclusive Christ during the last seven days of 1962. The next day, January 1 of 1963, I was brought by a brother to Whittier to share with a group of seeking ones there. My burden was to share the truth and experience of transformation. Today I am still speaking on transformation. Stanza 6 of *Hymns*, #548 says, "Transformation is my need, / To be broken more indeed, / That the clay may change in form, / To the treasure to conform." We were made as an earthen vessel, but this vessel should be transformed in its appearance. Transformation is not a kind of outward reformation or correction. Transformation is a metabolic change in the substantial form.

In the previous chapter we saw that in the universe today two worlds are going on. One is Satan's cosmos, Satan's satanic system, to systematize all the fallen people into his hands to form his kingdom. Even the United Nations is a great part of the cosmos of Satan. Satan built up his evil world by seducing man whom God created for God's purpose. Adam accepted Satan, so Satan as sin came into Adam to be Adam's nature. Romans 5 says that sin came in through one man (v. 12). Satan, sin, and the fallen man are now one. In the Bible the fallen man is called the flesh. Genesis 6 says that all men became flesh (v. 3). Satan, sin, and the flesh are the satanic trinity. They are three-in-one. These three coordinate together as one to build up Satan's evil kingdom.

The first appearance of this kingdom was Babel, which was established by Nimrod. Nimrod was a Cushite, and Cush is today's Ethiopia. God came in and scattered the rebellious ones at Babel, but He had not yet terminated the evil cosmos of Satan. Later, Egypt rose up to be a world power. The children of Abraham, God's chosen people, went down to Egypt and stayed there for more than four hundred years. History tells us that they were also under the domination of Medo-Persia, Greece, and eventually Rome. Even today the whole world is under Romanism. While Satan is building up the world, his cosmos, by his satanic trinity (Satan, sin, and the fallen man), God is working in His Divine Trinity to build up another world. Satan's world is altogether physical; God's world is altogether private and spiritual. These two worlds are still going on.

Among the many people who became flesh are those chosen and predestinated by God before the foundation of the world. These people are God's elect. God did not do anything to visit man in a direct way for the first four thousand years of man's existence. It was two thousand years from Adam to Abraham and two thousand years from Abraham to Christ. Then God suddenly came to visit man by incarnation. God came to the fallen race, including His fallen elect, in a very personal and affectionate way. He left His throne in the heavens and laid aside the form of God, temporarily and secretly hiding His divinity, to become a humble man by the name of Jesus.

God visited His elect in His human living for thirty-three and a half years. The Creator, the Almighty God, was on this earth living in His human shell as a little man to visit many people. He visited Peter, John, His mother, His mother's sister, His cousins, and His fleshly brothers. He was very personal

and affectionate. They did not realize who He was or what He was doing in His visitation. One day He went to the cross to terminate the old creation including the fallen humanity, the flesh. Through His death the physical Jesus was finished. The physical Jesus was God becoming a man for thirty-three and a half years. The Jews thought that Jesus was finished, but after three days this finished Jesus came out in resurrection in a transformed form. The first one to be transformed was Jesus. He was transformed from the physical form to the spiritual form.

On the evening of the day of resurrection, He came to His disappointed disciples. Although the doors were shut where the disciples were, Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst. He also did this again eight days later (John 20:26). Did He appear to the disciples physically or spiritually? This is a mystery. He was able to come into an enclosed room, but He also told Thomas to touch His hands and His side. Is He physical or spiritual? We can only say that He is the wonderful One. But after His ascension He does not visit His seekers physically. We can testify that we were visited by Him spiritually.

Jesus was physical before the day of Pentecost, but the Christ who was preached beginning from Acts 2 became spiritual. The twenty-two Epistles from Romans through Revelation do not teach a physical Jesus; instead, they teach a spiritual Christ. This spiritual Christ is for producing His members by transforming sinners into spiritual men for the raising up of the churches. The churches are a bridge to bridge God's transformed people from the physical side to the spiritual side.

Today the churches have a physical form and a spiritual reality. Ephesians 1 speaks of "the church, which is His Body" (vv. 22b-23a). The essence of the church is the Body of Christ. When a man dies, his corpse remains, but the essence of his person is gone. He is here in his corpse physically, but he is gone in his essence, his spirit. Likewise, the church has two sides: the physical side and the spiritual side. The physical side is the church as the house of God, and the spiritual side is the Body of Christ. First Timothy 3:15 speaks of the church as the house of God physically speaking, and Ephesians 1:22-23 reveals the church as the Body of Christ spiritually speaking. It is not the church that will consummate in the New Jerusalem. Instead, the Body of Christ, as a precursor of the holy city, will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

The New Jerusalem is altogether not a physical city but a spiritual, organic constitution.

Before we were saved, we were merely physical beings in a physical world, but one day Jesus visited us privately in a spiritual way. We received Him, and He regenerated us privately, secretly, and spiritually with God's divine life. From that day we became spiritual, but just partially, in our spirit. The rest of our entire being still remained untransformed in the physical world. Stanza 2 of *Hymns*, #750 says, "God hath us regenerated / In our spirit with His life; / But He must transform us further— / In our soul by His own life." After regeneration God works to transform our untransformed part, our soul.

Transformation is the cross of Christ crucifying our entire being. This cross is particularly crucifying our untransformed parts. We all have our particular natural disposition and character. I am a quick person, and my quick temperament needs to be crucified. When I have to wait for my wife, the "quick me" is crucified. I have been crucified by Christ practically for about seventy years, but my quick temperament is still here.

Every man's self is his center. Everyone is self-centered. When we are put in a prominent position or are noticed by others in the church life, we are happy. This is because we are so self-centered. When others do not give strong Amens to our sharing in the meetings, we are offended. We do not feel that the meetings are so good, because everyone else gets strong Amens but us. This illustration shows how much we need to be transformed.

To be transformed is a metabolic matter. When the food that we eat is metabolically digested and assimilated by us, we are transformed in a physical way. We are what we eat. This is an illustration of our spiritual transformation with the life of God as the element. Spiritual metabolism needs some element, and this element is God Himself through Christ in three steps: in Christ's death, in Christ's resurrection, and in Christ's ascension. We have the divine life of God, but this life has not been worked into our being to make this life a part of our being.

**TRANSFORMED BY THE TRANSFORMING SPIRIT
AND PERFECTED BY THE PERFECTED SAINTS
IN THE CHURCH LIFE**

The seeker's transformation in Song of Songs can be seen in the description of her in 1:10-11: "Your cheeks are lovely with plaits of ornaments, / Your neck with strings of jewels. / We will make you plaits of gold / With studs of silver." The perfected ones coordinate with the transforming Spirit to perfect the lover of Christ by adding God's divine nature (plaits of gold) into her. Then silver studs are added to bind the gold plaits together. Silver refers to Christ with His all-inclusive redemption in His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. His death is the redeeming, all-terminating, and life-releasing death; His resurrection is the all-germinating and life-dispensing resurrection; and His ascension is the all-transcending and all-attaining ascension. In His ascension He transcended Hades, the earth, the air, and even the third heaven. His ascension transcends everything that would frustrate us from going to God. We have to receive the reality of Christ in all these aspects.

First, the seeker in Song of Songs was likened by the Lord to a horse in Egypt (v. 9), signifying the world; she is enslaved by Satan, signified by Pharaoh's chariots. She is a mare among Pharaoh's chariots for his worldly purpose. She is full of natural strength with a strong character, worldly, satanic, and for the world's purpose. But then she is transformed to be a lily (2:1b-2). How can a horse be transformed into a lily? A horse is a strong animal, but a lily is just a little flower. God wants a lily rather than a horse. God does not want our natural strength. The lily does not have strength. The seeker being transformed into a lily signifies that she is now living a life trusting in God, not in her natural strength. She is also looking unto God with a single eye (eyes of doves), implying that she must also be a dove looking to God by focusing her eyes on one single goal (1:15b).

Her transformation is carried out by the transforming Spirit. The strings of jewels are a sign of the transforming Spirit. Thus, the seeker is perfected with the Triune God. Gold signifies God the Father in His golden nature, silver signifies Christ the Son in His all-inclusive redemption, and strings of jewels signify God the Spirit in His transformation. The perfected ones help the seeker to know God in His nature and to experience Christ in His death, resurrection, and ascension. This is to beautify the seeker in her submission to God through the transformation of the Spirit with the divine nature of God (plaits of gold) as ornaments in her expression (cheeks). The perfected ones also coordinate with the Spirit to beautify the seeker through the dispensing of the transforming Spirit with the divine life expressed as jewels in strings.

Transformation is the working of the Triune God's attributes into the seeking believers to become their virtues.

The perfected ones who have experienced this kind of transformation know how to perfect others. We all need to learn how to perfect others with the attributes of the Triune God. We need to know what the person before us needs. We should not look merely at a person's mistakes. Instead, we should realize that they are short of God's golden nature and life. They are short of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension. They are short of the Holy Spirit's work. We have to add all these things to them. We should not condemn others; instead, we should minister the life supply to them. We need to impress them that in the proper church life we pay our attention fully to the Triune God: God the Father as the divine nature and life, God the Son as the divine element, and God the Spirit as the transforming One in His divine essence. This is to minister the Triune God to them.

Such transformation and perfecting can take place only in the proper church life. The Lord directs us to the proper church life for the purpose of producing the essence of the church to constitute the Body of Christ for the upcoming consummation of the New Jerusalem. The seeker did not know God's economy and God's purpose, God's intention, but the Lord knows. In His private and spiritual contact with the seeker, God's eternal purpose is implied. The Lord's direction always implies God's eternal purpose, that is, to accomplish the economy of God. The perfecting in the church life is for the building up of the Body of Christ in the maturity of the lovers of Christ for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God.

CHAPTER FOUR

SATISFIED WITH CHRIST MUTUALLY IN THE CHURCHES

Scripture Reading: S. S. 1:12-14, 16-17; 2:2-6

OUTLINE

- I. A feast as the expression of the initial result of the mutual gain and enjoyment of Christ and His lover in the churches—S. S. 1:12:
 - A. Christ as the King is feasting with His lover at the table.
 - B. The love of His lover toward Him as spikenard spreads forth its fragrance.
- II. The lover's gain of Christ:
 - A. A bundle of myrrh, signifying Christ's sweet death for her—v. 13a.
 - B. A cluster of henna flowers, signifying Christ in His resurrection in the churches built upon the fountain of His redemption—v. 14.
 - C. The husband, implied in "couch"—bed—vv. 16-17.
 - D. An apple tree, rich in fruit and shade—2:3.
 - E. Raisin cakes for nourishment—v. 5a.
 - F. Apples for supply of life—v. 5b.
 - G. Both raisin cakes and apples are for the healing of her sickness of love in longing after her Beloved.
- III. Christ's gain of His lover:
 - A. A companion in love—1:12.
 - B. The wife—2:6.
 - C. A lily, signifying one who lives by His life in trusting in God—v. 2.
- IV. The lover's enjoyment of Christ:
 - A. As a bundle of myrrh between her breasts in the night—Christ in His death for her to embrace—1:13.
 - B. As a cluster of henna flowers—Christ in His resurrection for her to express—v. 14.
 - C. As her Husband in the divine life as the couch, in Christ in His resurrection as the beams, and in Christ in His death as the rafters for their shelter—vv. 16-17.

- D. As an apple tree as the bountiful supply of life to her and its shade overshadowing her—2:3; 2 Cor. 12:9.
- E. As the nourishing raisin cakes—S. S. 2:5a.
- F. As the refreshing apples—v. 5b.
- V. Christ's enjoyment of His lover:
 - A. The fragrance of His companion in love spreading forth as spikenard—1:12b.
 - B. As His wife in His embracing—2:6.
 - C. As a lily expressing Him in the filthy and unbelieving world—v. 2.
- VI. Unto the mutual satisfaction and rest of Christ and His lover in the churches:
 - A. Their mutual satisfaction and rest in their mutual enjoyment of all that they are respectively.
 - B. Especially their mutual satisfaction and rest in their bridal love and marriage life—1:16-17; 2:6.
- VII. The banqueting as the expression of the consummate result of the mutual gain and enjoyment of Christ and His lover:
 - A. In the church life—the banqueting house—v. 4a.
 - B. Christ's love-banner spreads over His lover—v. 4b.
 - C. Christ's bread of life nourishes His lover, and His rich supply of life refreshes her—v. 5.

LEARNING TO BUILD WITH GOLD, SILVER, AND PRECIOUS STONES

In the previous chapter we saw that transformation in the church life is carried out by the transforming Spirit. Second Corinthians 3:18 says that we are transformed by the Lord Spirit. Ultimately, the Spirit, the third of the Divine Trinity, has been processed, consummated, and compounded into the transforming all-inclusive Spirit, who is the consummated Triune God. The consummated Triune God is the transforming One.

In this transforming work there is the need of the Triune God to be the transforming Spirit, and there is the need of the coordination of some "transformers." In Ephesians 4 these transformers are referred to as perfecters. Ephesians 4:11-12 says that God has given some apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers to perfect the saints to do the work of

the ministry, that is, to build up the Body of Christ. Where are the perfecters today who know how to cooperate with the transforming Triune God? But here in this poetic book, which is very short, such a crystal is covered.

The transforming God is transforming us from a mare to a lily. Eventually, the seeker's hair is bound into plaits of gold. Suppose that a woman's hair grew straight up into the air, shooting to the heavens. This kind of hair "attacks" God's throne. To have plaited hair is an indication of submission to the Head, to the throne. But regrettably, very few sisters have their hair plaited, bound. When the sisters work with submitted hair, bound hair, this is a glory to the Lord. If they are not in submission, their hair is "scattered," not bound.

The lover of Christ has been transformed by the transforming Triune God to have plaited hair. Then the coordinators, the perfecting ones, say, "We will make you plaits of gold" (S. S. 1:11). Notice the word *we*, which refers to the perfecters. This means that the perfecters coordinate with the perfecting Spirit to put gold into the seeker's plaits. Gold refers to God the Father in His divine nature. Our submission to God's headship under His throne must be according to the divine nature. This is seen in the New Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem the gold signifies God's nature as the base (Rev. 21:18b). This gold is wrought into the seeker's bound hair. This signifies her submission to God through the transformation of the Spirit with the divine nature of God.

The plaits of gold are fastened with studs of silver. The silver studs are the fasteners and refer to the redeeming Christ. Only the redeeming Christ holds us, fastens us, so that we are not scattered. Christ accomplished God's complete redemption, so whatever He has done is altogether legal, judicial.

The element of gold is wrought into the lover's bound hair, and the plaits of gold are fastened by silver studs. Also, the seeker's neck is adorned with strings of jewels (S. S. 1:10). Jewels are precious stones. These precious stones put together as one into strings signify the transforming Spirit.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3 that we need to take heed how we build the church (vv. 10, 12). We should not build with wood, grass, and stubble but with gold, silver, and precious stones. This corresponds to Solomon's mentioning of gold, silver, and precious stones in Song of Songs. Eventually, what is built at the end of the Bible will be a city of gold, precious stones, and

pearls to replace silver. Silver signifies Christ the Son as the One who met all the legal requirements. The pearls bear the same significance. The pearl gates of the New Jerusalem are under the observation of the angels, through whom the law was ordained (Gal. 3:19), as the gatekeepers. Only God could have written such a book as the Bible, which is so unique and consistent. The entire Bible speaks the same thing concerning God's economy to produce the church as the Body of Christ, consummating in the New Jerusalem. This is the spiritual world that God is building up.

I would like to say again that our Christ is no longer physical. Christianity preaches mainly a physical Christ, but God is building up a spiritual world. The Epistles of the New Testament reveal that today Christ is pneumatic. He is no longer physical, because He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). This is a great vision. More than ever I am strengthened to proclaim that Christ is the life-giving Spirit.

We need to see that for the building up of God's spiritual world Christ visited us in two steps. The first step was His incarnation. He visited us personally and affectionately as a physical man. But during that period of time when He was a physical man, His disciples did not know anything spiritual. The kingdom that they and the other Jews expected was a physical one, but the kingdom of Christ is spiritual. Those in the physical world do not realize what God is doing with us. The Lord's concern is to gain the New Jerusalem through the precursor of the organic Body of Christ produced in the churches and composed of all the believers, not physically but spiritually. To perfect others with gold, silver, and precious stones is to build up God's spiritual world.

After many years of writing books on the Bible, J. N. Darby in his old age said, "O the joy of having nothing and being nothing, seeing nothing but a living Christ in glory, and being careful for nothing but His interests down here." Surely, Darby was in God's private and spiritual move. Are we? By the Lord's mercy Brother Nee and I worked together and saw the same vision of God's private and spiritual world. I have the full assurance that what I am doing here will go to the New Jerusalem. If we want what we do to be in the New Jerusalem, we need to learn how to add gold into the plaits of hair, how to make silver studs to hold the plaits of hair, and how to make strings of jewels, precious stones, to cover the naked neck. In other words, we need to

learn to build with gold, silver, and precious stones. We must learn to minister the Triune God in a practical way to others for their transformation.

MUTUAL SATISFACTION WITH CHRIST

Now we need to see how the Christ-seeker goes on to experience being satisfied with Christ mutually in the churches. At the beginning she was seeking her personal satisfaction, but then she was taught to seek satisfaction mutually with Christ. Is our spiritual satisfaction personal or mutual? First, it has to be personal; then gradually it has to be mutual with the very Christ whom we seek for our satisfaction. We should not be seeking our personal satisfaction so much that we forget about Christ's satisfaction. When we satisfy Him, we surely will be satisfied. If Christ has not been satisfied by us, we can never be satisfied by Christ. This satisfaction is mutual.

A FEAST AS THE EXPRESSION OF THE INITIAL RESULT OF THE MUTUAL GAIN AND ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST AND HIS LOVER IN THE CHURCHES

Christ as the King Feasting with His Lover at the Table

The lover of Christ is brought to a feast as the expression of the initial result of the mutual gain and enjoyment of Christ and His lover in the churches (S. S. 1:12). Christ is the Host, and His lover is the main guest, showing mutual enjoyment and satisfaction. Christ spreads a feast for the lover and her companions to enjoy.

The Love of His Lover toward Him as Spikenard Spreading Forth Its Fragrance

Christ as the King is feasting with His lover at the table, and the love of His lover toward Him as spikenard spreads forth its fragrance. The feast is fragrant, and the spikenard is even more fragrant. The invited one would say, "Host, thank You for Your feast." Then the Host would say to the invited one, "Dear guest, thank you for your spikenard." This is mutual enjoyment.

Whether or not we can have some spikenard to satisfy Christ depends upon whether or not we have that kind of love toward Him. The spikenard is the lover's, but the fragrance is Christ's. Christ's fragrance is expressed by the lover in her spikenard. Our experience of Christ should be constituted into spikenard. Otherwise, we have nothing to contain the fragrance of Christ. First, Christ satisfies us so that we gain the spikenard. Then we satisfy Christ by His fragrance. Such a mutual enjoyment for a mutual satisfaction is in the church life.

When we want to feast with Christ, we need the other church members. Christ would not go to the feast by Himself. At least we have to invite another five or seven to come. Then we will have a small group. But I am concerned that in our small group meetings, there is no feast with no table, spikenard, or fragrance.

THE LOVER'S GAIN AND ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST

The word *gain* is strongly used by Paul in Philippians 3, where he expresses his aspiration to gain Christ (v. 8). We need to see how to gain Christ.

As a Bundle of Myrrh and a Cluster of Henna Flowers Built upon the Fountain of His Redemption

The lover gains Christ as a bundle of myrrh (S. S. 1:13a), signifying Christ's sweet death for her, and as a cluster of henna flowers, signifying Christ in His resurrection in the churches built upon the fountain of His redemption (v. 14). If we are going to gain Christ, we must gain Him in His death. Christ today is in His death, in His resurrection, and in His Spirit. To gain Christ is to gain Him in His death, His resurrection, and His Spirit. His Spirit is in our spirit, His Spirit is the reality of His resurrection, and His resurrection always implies His death. These three—the death, the resurrection, and the Spirit of Christ—always go together. If we have the death of Christ, we have His resurrection. If we have His resurrection, we have His Spirit, who is in our spirit.

We may say that we have exercised our spirit quite often, but when we exercise our spirit, do we receive Christ's death and resurrection? Because of his quick disposition, a brother may be bothered by his slow wife. Then the Lord may say to him, "When you die with Me, you gain Me." If he would take this word, immediately he will enjoy Christ in His death as a bundle of myrrh. The next morning he will be very refreshed with Christ's resurrection. Then when he comes to the meeting, the Spirit of Christ will be in his speaking. The Spirit is constituted with Christ's death plus Christ's resurrection. We gain Christ through His death and resurrection in His Spirit, and this Spirit is in our spirit.

The lover enjoys Christ as a bundle of myrrh between her breasts in the night. This is Christ in His death for her to embrace privately (v. 13). Then she enjoys Christ as a cluster of henna flowers, which is Christ in His resurrection for her to express openly. This cluster of henna flowers is in the vineyards of En-gedi (v. 14). *En-gedi* means "the fountain of the lamb." This signifies that Christ in His resurrection in the churches is built upon the fountain of His redemption. This fountain, which is through Christ's redemption, is the Spirit. In the night we embrace Christ as a bundle of myrrh in His death. In the morning we wear Him as a cluster of henna flowers in His resurrection. This resurrection is in the church built upon the fountain of redemption. Here are the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ. This is the way that we gain Christ. Through the experience of His death and resurrection in His Spirit we gain Him.

**As Her Husband in the Divine Life as the Couch,
in Christ in His Resurrection as the Beams,
and in Christ in His Death as the Rafters for Their Shelter**

The lover also gains her Beloved as her Husband, implied in the couch. In verse 16 the lover says, "Indeed, our couch is green." The lover and the Beloved stay together on the grass-green couch. Green signifies the Spirit of life. The Spirit of life is the very place for us to enjoy Christ as our Husband. The couch is a bed for the lover and her Husband. So now she gains Christ not only as a bundle of myrrh and as a cluster of henna flowers but also as a Husband.

We gain and enjoy Christ as our Husband in the divine life as the couch, in Christ in His resurrection as the beams, and in Christ in His death as the rafters for our shelter. Verse 17 says, “The beams of our house are cedars; / Our rafters are cypresses.” The cedars from Lebanon signifies Christ in His resurrection. Cypress in typology signifies death. The Jewish people planted cypress beside their graves. The couple’s bed signifies the life-giving Spirit, the cedar beams of their house signify Christ’s resurrection, and the cypress rafters signify His death. Again we see Christ’s death, Christ’s resurrection, and Christ’s Spirit. All of this is in our spirit.

Second Timothy 4:22 says, “The Lord be with your spirit.” He is with us in our spirit, and with Him is the life-giving Spirit, the refreshing resurrection, and the terminating death. As long as we have Christ, we have the life-giving Spirit, the refreshing resurrection, and the terminating death. The way to gain Christ is to experience Him in His death and in His resurrection and to stay in His Spirit. His Spirit is the place for us to stay.

As the Apple Tree

The lover also gains and enjoys Christ as an apple tree, rich in fruit and shade (S. S. 2:3). As the apple tree, Christ is the bountiful supply of life to her with shade overshadowing her (2 Cor. 12:9). Christ is both our overshadowing grace and our supplying grace.

As the Nourishing Raisin Cakes and the Refreshing Apples

In the banqueting house Christ sustains His lover with raisin cakes for nourishment and apples for the supply of life (S. S. 2:5). The raisin cakes signify Christ in His death. The grape in the New Testament is related to Christ’s death because the juice of the grape signifies His shed blood. The dried grapes are raisins for our nourishment. Christ in His death is signified by the raisin, and Christ in His resurrection is signified by the fresh apples. We can be nourished by experiencing Christ as the crucified One, as the raisin. We can be refreshed by experiencing Christ in His resurrection, as the refreshing apples. Both raisin cakes and apples are for the healing of the lover’s sickness of love in longing after her Beloved.

CHRIST’S GAIN AND ENJOYMENT OF HIS LOVER

Christ gains His lover as a companion in love (1:12), as the wife (2:6), and as a lily, signifying one who lives by His life in trusting in God (v. 2). He enjoys the fragrance of His companion in love spreading forth as spikenard (1:12b). He also enjoys His lover as His wife in His embracing (2:6) and as a lily expressing Him in the filthy and unbelieving world (v. 2). When we live the lily life, trusting Him and looking unto God with a single eye, the dove's eyes, that is a joy to Christ and His boast.

**UNTO THE MUTUAL SATISFACTION
AND REST OF CHRIST
AND HIS LOVER IN THE CHURCHES**

The lover's gain and enjoyment of Christ, and Christ's gain and enjoyment of His lover, result in the mutual satisfaction and rest of Christ and His lover in the churches. We need to consider the difference between rest and satisfaction. The lover asked the Lord where He pastured His flock for satisfaction and where He made it lie down at noon for rest (1:7). Rest concerns the environment, the situation, and the condition. Sometimes our environment, condition, and circumstances do not allow us rest. If there is no problem or disturbance, we have rest. But on that day of rest we may be short of food. We need something to nourish and refresh us to satisfy us. Satisfaction comes from the supply, whereas rest comes from the environment, condition, and circumstances. When the environment is all right, we have rest. When the food supply is sufficient, we have satisfaction.

Christ and His lover have mutual satisfaction and rest in their mutual enjoyment of all that they are respectively. The lover has her gain and enjoyment, and the Beloved, Christ, has His gain and enjoyment. When both are put together, there is mutual satisfaction and rest, especially their mutual satisfaction and rest in their bridal love and marriage life (vv. 16-17; 2:6). If a couple goes on a honeymoon and their car breaks down, all the restaurants are closed, and all the hotels are full, they cannot have rest and satisfaction. The normal church life is not like this. In the normal, proper church life, we always have both rest and satisfaction. If the church is abnormal, there is suffering with no rest or satisfaction. In these recent years we can testify that we are full of rest and satisfaction. There has been no turmoil among us, and the life supply has never been short.

**THE BANQUETING AS THE EXPRESSION
OF THE CONSUMMATE RESULT
OF THE MUTUAL GAIN AND ENJOYMENT
OF CHRIST AND HIS LOVER**

The initial result of the mutual gain and enjoyment of Christ and His lover is a feast, and the consummate result is the banqueting in the banqueting house, the church life (v. 4a). In the church life as the banqueting house, Christ's love-banner spreads over His lover (v. 4b). This love-banner is an exhibition of Christ's victory. Christ's victory is all-conquering. The end of Romans 8 says that because of God's unchanging love for us and the fact that Christ has accomplished everything on our behalf, neither tribulation nor persecution can suppress or defeat us; rather, in all these things we more than overcome and conquer through Him who loved us (vv. 31-39).

We are more than conquerors because of God's love in Christ. God's love in Christ is a banner spreading over us, displaying, exhibiting, that we who are loved by God are always more than conquerors. If God were not in Christ, there would be no judicial guarantee. But in Christ everything is guaranteed by His death fulfilling all the legal requirements. That is His judicial redemption. In today's church life there is a banner of the everlasting love of God that is in Christ.

In the church life as the banqueting house, Christ's bread of life nourishes His lover, and His rich supply of life refreshes her (S. S. 2:5). In the church life we always have the adequate nourishment and refreshment. We also have a love that conquers everything if we live in this love. This is the mutual gain and enjoyment between Christ and His lover in the churches.

CHAPTER FIVE
DELIVERED FROM THE SELF
BY THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: S. S. 2:14-15

OUTLINE

- I. Delivered from the self:
 - A. The attainment of the lover of Christ in her pursuing after Christ for satisfaction and rest results in a condition in which she overcares for her spiritual condition before Christ concerning whether or not she remains in the perfection she has attained.
 - B. This causes her to fall into introspection, which becomes the seclusion as a wall that keeps her away from the presence of Christ—2:9.
 - C. This peculiarity of introspection becomes one of the “little foxes” that ruin the flourishing resurrection of Christ in the churches—v. 15.
- II. By the cross of Christ:
 - A. Hence, Christ comes as a gazelle leaping upon the mountains and as a young hart skipping upon the hills, showing forth His resurrection power over difficulties, to call her repeatedly to rise up from her down situation and come away to Him from that situation which separates her from Him—vv. 8-10, 13b.
 - B. Christ wants her to remain in the cross, that is, to stay in “the clefts of the rock” and in “the covert of the precipice”—v. 14a.
 - C. Christ wants to see her countenance and hear her voice in the cross as the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice—v. 14b.
 - D. To stay in the cross is a hard matter, like getting into the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice by a rugged road.
 - E. It could be only by the power of Christ’s resurrection shown in the leaping of the gazelle upon the mountains and the skipping of the young hart upon the hills, not by her natural life.
 - F. This is to “deny” herself as the Lord charged in Matthew 16:24.
 - G. This is also to be conformed to the death of Christ by the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10).

- H. It is only in this way that she can be delivered from her self, which frustrates her from experiencing Christ in His resurrection, signified by the flourishing spring in S. S. 2:11-13a.
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As an opening word to this chapter, I would like to share something concerning the way that we study the Bible. We study the Word of life by the way of life. This is why we have called our Bible study a life-study of the Bible. Our life-study is different from Christianity theology. In Christianity there are many kinds of theology. All these kinds of theology in a certain sense help people but in a greater sense retain them in that theology. For example, Reformed theology in a sense helps people, but in a stronger sense it holds people back and keeps them far away from the divine revelation that is unveiled in God's holy Word. The more we compare traditional theology with the teaching of the Bible, the more discrepancies we find.

According to traditional theology, the Son of God was born to be a man, but the Bible says that God was manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). Here is a discrepancy. Was the incarnation the incarnation of the Son only or of the entire God, the complete God? Certainly it was the Son's incarnation, but we should never forget that the Son is a part of the Divine Trinity. Colossians 2:9 says that Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God. The Son's incarnation was the incarnation of the Divine Trinity, including the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

Now we have gone higher from the life-study of the Bible to what we call the crystallization-study. The life-study is on the first level. The crystallization-study is on the second level. *Crystallization* in our usage is based upon the essence. We want to see the organic "crystals" in the Bible.

Let us consider one of these crystals in the book of Romans. Romans comprises two sections. The first is judicial. The second is organic. Romans 1:17 says, "The righteous shall have life and live by faith." "The righteous shall have" is judicial, unveiling the legal procedure of God's salvation in saving sinners. "Shall have life and live by faith" is organic, unveiling the purpose of God's salvation in carrying out God's economy according to His desire. Christ's redemption by His blood is the first part of God's salvation. This is judicial to fulfill the righteous requirements according to God's righteous law.

But this is just the procedure, not the purpose. The purpose is for man to have life and to live life. The church as the Body of Christ cannot be seen in the judicial part of God's salvation. The Body of Christ is in the organic aspect. The judicial process and the organic purpose of God's salvation are a big "crystal" in the book of Romans.

We need to be convinced that the genuine, pure revelation according to the Holy Scripture is critically different from today's Christianity theology. Today's Christianity is deformed and degraded. I am burdened to share this because by listening to our prayers, I can sense the oldness. Our prayers have been formed, regulated, and kept mostly according to the old theology. We should not pray according to the old theology. Instead, we should pray according to what we have seen recently.

DELIVERED FROM THE SELF

Song of Songs 2:14-15 portrays the lover's deliverance from the self by the cross of Christ.

Overcaring for Her Spiritual Condition

The attainment of the lover of Christ in her pursuing after Christ for satisfaction and rest results in a condition in which she overcares for her spiritual condition before Christ concerning whether or not she remains in the perfection she has attained. When I was young, after giving a good message, I could not forget about it. I would remain in it to enjoy it. Eventually, I would make it the standard for my upcoming messages. All the messages had to be as good as that one. This meant that I had attained to a certain condition and that I wanted to remain in it. When some of the sisters give a testimony in the meetings, they are looking for strong Amens from the saints. One day a sister may give a wonderful word, and the saints may respond with strong Amens and Hallelujahs. That makes the sister feel that she has been exalted to the third heaven. She would never forget this experience and would make it her standard because that became a condition to which she had attained.

This boasting produces the self. The self is produced by self-boasting, self-exaltation, and self-glorification. The more we boast of ourselves, the stronger our self becomes. Based upon our boasting, we exalt ourselves. Then

we glorify ourselves. We may not admit this. Instead, we may say, “I gave all the glory to God.” But still we received the exaltation. Exaltation means glorification. To exalt God is to glorify Him. Pride is the source of self.

Falling into Introspection

Overcaring for her spiritual condition causes the lover of Christ to fall into introspection, which becomes the seclusion as a wall that keeps her away from the presence of Christ (v. 9). The Bible tells us to look away unto Jesus (Heb. 12:2), but introspection always directs us to look into ourselves. Introspection is an inward inspection of our inner condition. In our introspection we may ask, “Am I still perfect? Am I still so good in the eyes of God, or have I degraded a little bit?” Such introspection increases the self, resulting in a kind of seclusion as a wall to separate us from the presence of Christ.

Since we have this introspection, there is a wall built up between us and our Lord. We find that He is outside and we are within, and this discovery causes us to be more introspective. We may ask, “Why don’t I have the Lord’s presence? It seems that I am within the wall, and He is outside the wall. Why?” This becomes a cycle in which the self is growing and increasing. The self then becomes a prison to imprison us.

This kind of spiritual sickness is not experienced by the cold ones but by the ones who are burning for the Lord. The more burning for the Lord you are, the more your self may be built up. The more you pursue after the Lord, the more you attain to something, and the more you may build up your self. Eventually, the self becomes a center. Your whole life with all its details becomes centered on your self.

The “Little Foxes” Ruining the Flourishing Resurrection of Christ

This peculiarity of introspection becomes one of the “little foxes” that ruin the flourishing resurrection of Christ in the churches (S. S. 2:15). Our peculiarity frustrates our experience of Christ’s resurrection. A brother’s peculiarity may be his quick temperament, which has been built up over many years. But every time we are willing to have our self with our peculiarity crucified, resurrection will follow. Resurrection is signified in 2:11-13 by the

passing of winter, the ceasing of rain, the appearance of flowers, the time of singing, the voice of the turtledove, the fig tree ripening, and the vines blossoming and giving forth their fragrance. If we are unwilling to be crucified and we remain in our peculiarity, this “little fox” will destroy our experience of Christ’s resurrection.

BY THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Christ Coming as a Gazelle and a Young Hart, Showing Forth His Resurrection Power

Hence, Christ comes as a gazelle leaping upon the mountains and as a young hart skipping upon the hills, showing forth His resurrection power over difficulties, to call her repeatedly to rise up from her down situation and come away to Him from that situation which separates her from Him (vv. 8-10, 13b). According to our condition and situation, we surely need to cross out our peculiarity. But to get into the cross and remain there is not easy. If we have a quick temperament and are with a slow person, some may advise us to exercise patience. But the more we exercise our own effort to cross out ourselves, the more Satan will come in to stir up our reasonings. This is related to spiritual warfare. In order to receive the crucifixion of Christ, to be put to death, we need the power of the resurrection of Christ (Phil. 3:10).

It is difficult for us to reach the cross (signified by the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice) and remain there. At this time Christ is seen by His lover as a gazelle leaping upon the mountains and as a young hart skipping upon the hills. The way to reach the covert of the precipice is rugged. To receive the crucifixion of Christ to put us to death is a rugged way, not easy to reach. Even after reaching this place, it is hard to stay there. Do we want to stay in the covert of the precipice? Do we want to stay in the clefts of the rock upon the high mountains? This is why we need the power of the resurrection of Christ. Philippians 3:10 says that we are to be conformed to His death by the power of His resurrection. Christ is a gazelle full of leaping power and a young hart full of skipping power. This is the power of resurrection. Our being crucified is not by our natural life or natural strength but by Christ’s power of resurrection.

All the experiences of Christ are related to His death, His resurrection, and His Spirit. His death goes along with His resurrection, and His Spirit is the

realization of His resurrection. In order to know the power of Christ's resurrection, we must learn to turn from our mind to our spirit continually (Rom. 8:6). When we turn to our spirit, we have nothing to do but pray. When we turn to our spirit and pray, immediately the Spirit is with us as the power of resurrection. Then as we take the cross, those around us may not know that we have been crucified and are in resurrection. This may cause us to sing, "Hallelujah, Christ is Victor!" When we enjoy the power of His resurrection, He is the Victor in our experience, and we are the conquerors. The way to experience Christ in His crucifixion by the power of His resurrection is by the Spirit Himself who is in our spirit. Romans 8:6 says, "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace."

In order to experience Christ and to gain Christ, we need to know the all-inclusiveness of Christ. We also need to know that we have a regenerated human spirit and that today the Spirit of God has become the consummated life-giving Spirit of Christ as the power of His resurrection. We must know these three things. Then we can experience Christ and gain Him.

Remaining in the Cross

Christ wants His seeker to remain in the cross, that is, to stay in "the clefts of the rock" and in "the covert of the precipice" (S. S. 2:14a). Christ wants us to remain in the cross continually. The brothers need to be crossed out in their relationship with their wives. Christ wants us to remain in a crucified condition all the time. We may say that some of the things that come to us in our environment to trouble us are Satan's work, but they are also God's assignment. God's assignment is to put us to death. In the midst of our troubling environment we must learn to turn our mind to our spirit to receive the strengthening of the Spirit as the power of resurrection.

Christ wants to see His seeker's countenance and hear her voice in the cross as the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice (v. 14b). To stay in the cross is a hard matter, like getting into the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice by a rugged road. It could be only by the power of Christ's resurrection shown in the leaping of the gazelle upon the mountains and the skipping of the young hart upon the hills, not by her natural life. This is to "deny" herself as the Lord charges in Matthew 16:24. This is also to be conformed to the death of Christ by the power of His resurrection. It is only in

this way that she can be delivered from her self, which frustrates her from experiencing Christ in resurrection.

God's salvation is to transform us, to make us a new man, a part of the new creation. We must be transformed through denying ourselves. To deny the self is to leave the self on the cross so that we can be renewed. Day after day by the crossing out we become newer and newer. Eventually, we mature to be a new man. This is the reason that God deals with us in the way of crucifixion. God's way is not to correct or improve us. God wants to re-create us through transformation, and this transformation is by our being crucified.

Previously, we have seen that we need to perfect others with gold, silver, and precious stones. The lover needs gold added to her plaits of hair, silver studs to hold the plaits, and strings of jewels, precious stones. We need to experience the Triune God as gold, silver, and precious stones, and then we can perfect others with the Triune God by helping them to deny themselves so that they can be with the Lord in a new way to be renewed and transformed to become absolutely a new man in God's new creation. It is only by being conformed to the death of Christ by the power of His resurrection that we can be delivered from our self to be transformed. Through the crossing-out way, we become completely a new man in God's new creation for God to fulfill His economy so that we can be the organic Body of Christ. The organic Body of Christ comes out of this kind of crossing out.

Stanzas 1 and 2 with the chorus of *Hymns*, #477 speak of the experience of being delivered from the self by the cross of Christ:

Though Christ a thousand times
In Bethlehem be born,
If He's not born in thee
Thy soul is still forlorn.
The Cross on Golgotha,
Will never save thy soul;
The Cross in thine own heart,
Alone can make thee whole.

O, Cross of Christ, I take thee
Into this heart of mine,

That I to my own self may die
And rise to Thy life Divine.

What e'er thou lovest, man,
That too become thou must;
God, if thou lovest God,
Dust, if thou lovest dust.
Go out, God will come in;
Die thou and let Him live;
Be not and He will be;
Wait and He'll all things give.

CHAPTER SIX
EMPOWERED AND ENCOURAGED
BY THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: S. S. 2:8-13

OUTLINE

- I. In order to empower and encourage His lover to rise up and get away from her down situation in her introspection of the self:
 - A. Christ empowers her by showing her the power of His resurrection by the gazelle's leaping upon the mountains and the young hart's skipping upon the hills—S. S. 2:8-9:
 - 1. It is by this power of Christ's resurrection that we, the lovers of Christ, determine to take the cross by denying our self (Matt. 16:24).
 - 2. It is also by this power of Christ's resurrection that we, the lovers of Christ, are enabled to be conformed to His death (Phil. 3:10), to be one with His cross as staying in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the precipice (S. S. 2:14).
 - B. Christ encourages her by the flourishing riches of His resurrection—vv. 11-13:
 - 1. The dormant days (winter) are past, and the trials (rain) are over and gone.
 - 2. The life in all appearances is blossoming.
 - 3. The time of praising—singing—has come.
 - 4. The fruit tree has ripened in its fruits.
 - 5. The vines are in blossom, giving forth their fragrance.
- II. Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, was resurrection (John 11:25) before His death, indicating that the entirety of the Triune God is resurrection in the universe:
 - A. Christ as the God-man in His humanity was made the firstborn Son of God in resurrection (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:3-4; 8:29).
 - B. Christ as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45).

- C. God regenerated many sons through the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet. 1:3), making them His new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).
 - III. The resurrected Christ becoming the life-giving Spirit as the reality of His resurrection (John 11:25):
 - A. The resurrection of Christ is linked with the Spirit who gives life.
 - B. This life-giving Spirit indwells our spirit (Rom. 8:11; Eph. 2:22).
 - C. Hence, our regenerated spirit indwelt by the life-giving Spirit becomes the Holiest of all as God's dwelling place linked with the Holiest of all in the third heaven (Heb. 4:16).
 - D. This Christ as the life-giving Spirit becomes the heavenly ladder that brings heaven to earth and joins earth to heaven at Bethel—God's dwelling place in the spirit of the believers on earth (Gen. 28:11-22; John 1:51).
 - E. We have to discern our spirit from our soul:
 1. In our soul we are the old man (Eph. 4:22), the soulish man, the natural man (1 Cor. 2:14).
 2. In our spirit we are the new man (Eph. 4:24), the spiritual man (1 Cor. 2:14-15), that lives and walks in our spirit, as God's Holiest of all, indwelt by and mingled with the life-giving Spirit, the pneumatic Christ.
 3. It is in such a mingled spirit that we participate in and experience the resurrection of Christ, the reality of which is the all-inclusive, life-giving, compound Spirit, the consummation of the processed and consummated Triune God.
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In the previous chapter we saw that we need to be delivered from the self by the cross of Christ. Most of us are short of this kind of experience. We have the light of the truth and even speak the deep things of God's economy, but we do not have the support of the adequate experiences of Christ. *Hymns*, #482 by A. B. Simpson is concerning the experience of being crucified with Christ. Stanza 5 says, "This the balm for pain and sickness, / Just to all our strength to die, / And to find His life and fullness, / All our being's need supply." If we die to our self and take the Lord's resurrection life and power as our life supply, this conformation to the death of Christ by the power of His resurrection in our daily life heals us. According to the revelation of God's complete gospel, Isaiah 53:4-5 makes it very clear that in His redeeming death on the cross, Christ has borne all our griefs and carried our sorrows;

furthermore, by His chastening we receive peace and by His stripes we are healed. No one can be healed before God without Christ's death for his redemption.

Christ's redemption has accomplished two things: our sins can be forgiven, and our illnesses can be healed. Without Christ's death there is no healing. Many Pentecostals stress miraculous healing, but they have no idea that healing is the consummation of Christ's death. Such miraculous healing is called in Hebrews 6:5 "the powers of the age to come." Eventually, God will give us the consummate healing, which will be our resurrection from the dead and rapture.

After the experience of the cross is the experience of resurrection. Resurrection is always an empowering and an encouraging factor. Christ's resurrection power is signified by the gazelle's leaping on the mountains and the young hart's skipping on the hills. We can be conformed to Christ's death by the power of His resurrection. Another A. B. Simpson hymn on our being crucified with Christ says, "'Tis not hard to die with Christ / When His risen life we know" (*Hymns*,#481). To remain in Christ's death we need the power of His resurrection. Romans 6:4 says that we were baptized into Christ's death. From the time of our baptism we should bear the cross daily to remain in His death (Luke 9:23).

A ROMANCE IN POETIC FORM

The book of Song of Songs is a romance in poetic form between a king and a country girl. This is a figure of the romance of God and man. In the first two chapters is the initiation of the portrait of this excellent romance. In this initiation the female pursues the male for her satisfaction. Then the male leads her into the secret chamber. In that chamber this female is brought into fellowship with the king and so many of his lovers. Through that fellowship in the inner chamber, the king directs his follower to go forth on the footsteps of the flock, which means that our King, Christ, directs us to take the way of the church life (1:6-8). This portion of Song of Songs presents a picture of how to discern the proper church life in the midst of today's confusion of divisions.

In today's church life the main thing is transformation. God intends not to improve us but to re-create us, to make us new persons. He does this first by regeneration and second by transformation. Romans 12:2 says that we are

transformed by the renewing of the mind. Then 2 Corinthians 3:18 says that we are transformed into the image of the glory of Christ. Transformation is a divine metabolism. It is not an outward change but an inward process to transform us into different persons. Regeneration has been accomplished once for all, but transformation is a lifelong process. Eventually, we will be conformed to the image of Christ. Romans 8:29-30 says that we are called, then justified, and then conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God. Conformation implies transformation and consummates in glorification. When we are glorified, our transformation will be completely consummated to make us totally new persons.

In the church life there is also our gaining of Christ and His gaining of us—a mutual gaining. We also enjoy Christ and He enjoys us—a mutual enjoyment. The beginning of this mutual gain and enjoyment is a feast, and the conclusion is a banqueting house.

Following the initial stage, the Lord comes in to call us to go on to the stage of the cross. Many in Christianity exalt the cross. They have the cross on the top of their cathedrals, and they adorn themselves with the cross. They know the cross mostly in a physical sense. We need to see why the cross of Christ is so precious, especially in the eyes of God.

THE WORK OF THE CROSS

The cross is precious to the uttermost because the cross terminated all the enemies of God. God has four main enemies: Satan, sin, the flesh (the fallen man), and the world (the satanic cosmos). By one crucifixion Christ terminated these four enemies of God. Satan was crucified (Heb. 2:14; John 12:31), sin was condemned (Rom. 8:3), the old fallen man was crucified (6:6; Gal. 2:20), and the world was crucified and judged (6:14; John 12:31). At the same time, the cross of Christ released the divine life (v. 24). Christ crucified all the negative things and then released something positive to supply God's eternally chosen people. The divine life released by the cross of Christ is God Himself.

John 19:34 says that when Christ was crucified, two substances flowed out from Him: blood and water. The blood is for the judicial need, and the water, the flowing divine life, is for the organic need. The released divine life was

then dispensed in Christ's resurrection. This is why the cross is so precious in the eyes of God. God loves the cross.

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE RESURRECTION

Following the cross is the resurrection of Christ, in which three great things took place. First, in the resurrection of Christ, Christ in His humanity was begotten to be God's firstborn Son (Rom. 1:4; 8:29). In that resurrection His humanity, which He inherited from the seed of David (1:3), was designated the Son of God by the Spirit of holiness, which was Christ's divine essence. His divine essence in the resurrection uplifted His humanity from the human level to the divine level. God came in to beget Him on that day. Acts 13:33 says that on the day of resurrection Christ was begotten by God: "You are My Son; this day have I begotten You." "This day" is the day of resurrection.

The second great thing that was accomplished in Christ's resurrection was that He, as the last Adam, became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). Before that "becoming," Christ was physical. He was in the flesh. Wherever He was, people saw Him as a man in the flesh. Even He was hanging on the cross as a man in the flesh. But after not more than three days He was transformed into the life-giving Spirit. Christ's physical body was buried in a tomb, but in resurrection His physical body was transformed. When Peter and John entered into the tomb, they saw the grave clothes, but they did not see Christ's body. The physical Jesus had been transformed into the life-giving Spirit. In the evening of the day of resurrection, He came back to His disciples as the physical Jesus who had been transformed to be the life-giving Spirit (John 20:19-22). The transformed Christ is the life-giving Spirit. The twenty-two Epistles of the New Testament do not teach a physical Christ but a pneumatic Christ, a Christ who is the totality of the Spirit of God.

The third great thing that took place on the day of resurrection was that God regenerated all His chosen people (1 Pet. 1:3) when He begot Christ to be His firstborn Son. We have been regenerated, but many of us do not know our birthday. We were regenerated, born again, about two thousand years ago on the day of Christ's resurrection. This is according to the biblical calendar. Christ is the firstborn Son of God, and we are His many "twins." Thus, the resurrection produced the firstborn Son of God, the life-giving Spirit, and the many sons of God. The firstborn Son of God is the Head, and His many brothers, the sons of God, are the members of Christ. The Head with all the

members is a complete organism, the Body of Christ. This is what the Bible unveils concerning the resurrection of Christ.

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The Lord wants us to experience His cross so that we may enter into His resurrection. The calling for the cross and the resurrection figured by the springtime is in Song of Songs 2. The Beloved calls His lover by saying, "Rise up, my love, / My beauty, and come away" (v. 10). He calls her into the springtime. The winter is a time of dormancy, but now there is budding and blossoming to replace dormancy. The flowers, the fruit, the time of singing, and the voice of the turtledove are a picture of resurrection. The Lord's seeker is disappointed by her introspection. When she looks into herself, it is the wintertime of dormancy. But when she looks away to the resurrected Christ, she enters into the stage of spring, signifying the stage of resurrection.

Let us consider how to apply this fellowship with an illustration. Suppose that a brother would not take the cross in dealing with his wife. Then he would have no spring, no time of praising and singing. But if he accepts the cross in dealing with his wife to be conformed to the death of Christ, he will enjoy the springtime of Christ's resurrection with everything budding and blossoming. When he stays in the cross, he enjoys Christ's presence. If a brother does not have such an experience of the cross, his speaking in the meeting will be without the content of resurrection. In his speaking we would sense no power, no blossoming, no bearing of fruit. But when he has the experience of the cross, we can sense the springtime in his speaking. Do we spend our days sighing instead of singing? Our sighing is the sign of our rejection of the cross. If we receive the cross, right away the resurrection comes. Resurrection always follows the cross.

The reality of the resurrection is the pneumatic Christ who is the consummated Spirit. This consummated Spirit is in our spirit. Our spirit has become His dwelling place. Our spirit is the Holy of Holies for the Triune God as the consummated Spirit living within us. This is why we say, "Turn to your spirit." About thirty years ago when we were in Elden hall in Los Angeles, everyone was singing this. That was the springtime. But why has the spring gradually ceased among us? This is because we do not accept the cross. The rejection of the cross causes us to suffer the winter, the dormant stage.

EMPOWERED BY THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

In order to empower and encourage His lover to rise up and get away from her down situation in her introspection of the self, Christ empowers her by showing her the power of His resurrection by the gazelle's leaping upon the mountains and the young hart's skipping upon the hills (vv. 8-9). It is by this power of Christ's resurrection that we, the lovers of Christ, determine to take the cross by denying our self (Matt. 16:24). Have we ever had such a determination? Often we forget what we determined to do before God. We need to be reminded. It is also by this power of Christ's resurrection that we, the lovers of Christ, are enabled to be conformed to His death (Phil. 3:10), to be one with His cross as staying in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the precipice (S. S. 2:14).

ENCOURAGED BY THE FLOURISHING RICHES OF HIS RESURRECTION

Christ encourages His seeker by the flourishing riches of His resurrection (vv. 11-13). The dormant days (winter) are past, and the trials (rain) are over and gone. The life in all appearances is blossoming. The time of praising—singing—has come. The fruit tree has ripened in its fruits, and the vines are in blossom, giving forth their fragrance. This is a portrait of the riches of Christ's resurrection.

CHRIST BEING RESURRECTION

Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, was resurrection (John 11:25) before His death. When He came to the tomb of Lazarus, Christ said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life." That "I" is the embodiment of the Triune God, indicating that the entirety of the Triune God is resurrection in the universe. Resurrection is God Himself. We have seen that Christ as the God-man in His humanity was made the firstborn Son of God in resurrection (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:3-4; 8:29). Christ as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45). Also, God regenerated many sons through the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet. 1:3), making them His new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).

THE RESURRECTED CHRIST BECOMING THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

The resurrected Christ became the life-giving Spirit as the reality of His resurrection (John 11:25). The resurrection of Christ is linked with the Spirit who gives life. This life-giving Spirit indwells our spirit (Rom. 8:11; Eph. 2:22). Hence, our regenerated spirit indwelt by the life-giving Spirit becomes the Holiest of all as God's dwelling place linked with the Holiest of all in the third heaven (Heb. 4:16).

This Christ as the life-giving Spirit becomes the heavenly ladder that brings heaven to earth and joins the earth to heaven at Bethel—God's dwelling place in the spirit of the believers on earth (Gen. 28:11-22; John 1:51). While Jacob was escaping from his brother Esau, in the night he had a dream in which he saw a vision of a ladder set up on the earth with its top reaching to heaven. He called the name of that place Bethel, the house of God. The ladder brings heaven to earth and joins earth to heaven. At the end of John 1, Jesus said that the angels of God would ascend and descend upon the Son of Man, indicating that He was that ladder (v. 51).

Jacob's dream and the Lord's prophecy are both fulfilled in us. We are a part of God's house, Bethel, which brings heaven to earth and joins earth to heaven. We need to realize that as the duplication of Christ, we are a heavenly ladder bringing heaven to earth and joining earth to heaven. When we minister Christ to sinners, they will appreciate Christ and receive Christ. This is to bring heaven to the earth. Then when we help them to grow, we are joining them to heaven. Every day we should be persons bringing heaven to earth and joining earth to heaven. This is Bethel, which is our regenerated spirit and the chamber where God dwells.

In order to experience the life-giving Spirit as the reality of resurrection in our spirit, we have to discern our spirit from our soul. In our soul we are the old man (Eph. 4:22), the soulish man, the natural man (1 Cor. 2:14). In our spirit we are the new man (Eph. 4:24), the spiritual man (1 Cor. 2:14-15), that lives and walks in our spirit as God's Holiest of all, indwelt by and mingled with the life-giving Spirit, the pneumatic Christ. It is in such a mingled spirit that we participate in and experience the resurrection of Christ, the reality of which is the all-inclusive, life-giving, compound Spirit, the consummation of the processed and consummated Triune God.

By this we can see that resurrection has a base, and this base is the death of Christ. This resurrection today is realized in the Spirit. The Spirit is the reality of the resurrection. Thus, these three things—the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ—are the means for us to enjoy Christ, experience Christ, and gain Christ in our spirit. The death, resurrection, and Spirit of Christ are one in our spirit as a living person, and this living person is the compound Spirit, the all-inclusive Spirit, as the consummation of the processed and consummated Triune God. We can enjoy, experience, and gain this wonderful One day by day as the resurrection to empower and encourage us to take the way of the cross.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MOVING WITH GOD AND UNITED WITH CHRIST

Scripture Reading: S. S. 3:6-11

OUTLINE

- I. Moving with God—S. S. 3:6:
 - A. As an overcomer, a representative of God's elect, as a person in the unshakable power of the Spirit (pillars of smoke—cf. Exo. 14:19-20).
 - B. Coming up from the wilderness of Egypt—the world.
 - C. Perfumed with the sweet death and fragrant resurrection of Christ and with all the fragrant riches of Christ as a merchant.
- II. United with Christ—illustrated by three items:
 - A. The bed—S. S. 3:7-8:
 - 1. The lover of Christ, signified by the bed, and Christ, signified by its sleeper, are in a union of love.
 - 2. The bed is for rest in the night—v. 8b.
 - 3. It is in the wartime, signified by the sixty mighty men surrounding the bed—vv. 7-8a.
 - 4. The bed for the night in the wartime indicates that the lover of Christ is an overcomer along with the sixty mighty men who can afford Christ a resting vehicle in the fighting with victory.
 - B. The palanquin—vv. 9-10:
 - 1. The lover of Christ, signified by the palanquin, and Christ, signified by its rider, are in a union of triumphant celebration.
 - 2. The palanquin is for travel in the day.
 - 3. As the palanquin for Solomon to be manifested in the triumphant celebration of his victory, the lover of Christ is composed of:
 - a. Christ's renewing resurrection, signified by the wood of Lebanon, as the palanquin's main structure.
 - b. Christ's redeeming death, signified by silver, as its supporting posts.
 - c. God's divine nature, signified by gold, as its base.
 - d. Christ's kingship, signified by purple, as its seat.

- e. The inside of the palanquin is inlaid with the love of Christ's seekers, signifying that the lover of Christ is one with all the seekers of Christ in love in the principle of the Body of Christ.
 - C. Solomon's espousal—v. 11:
 - 1. The lover of Christ, signified by the Shulammite, and Christ, signified by Solomon, are united to be one in the bridal love and marriage life.
 - 2. This portrays the church and Christ being united to be completely and fully one organically in the mingled spirit (1 Cor. 6:17):
 - a. In the present church age as a precursor.
 - b. In the coming kingdom age as the practical wedding for one thousand years.
 - c. In the eternal age as the full marriage life signified by the New Jerusalem for eternity.
 - D. The union of the lover of Christ with Christ has made her God's new creation in Christ's resurrection:
 - 1. Her union with Christ is in Christ's resurrection.
 - 2. Christ's resurrection has made her God's new creation.
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BECOMING WORTHY OF GOD'S ECONOMY TO MOVE WITH GOD IN UNION WITH CHRIST

Song of Songs is a romance of Christ with His elect, written as poetry. Let us review the crucial points, or "crystals," that we have covered thus far. First, there is the initial pursuit by the lover. Second, the lover is brought into the inner chamber of fellowship. Third, the lover is directed to enter into the proper church life. Then in the church life there is the transformation to transform us, the saved ones, absolutely in the divine life, making us the new creation. Fifth, there is the mutual gain and enjoyment of Christ and His lovers. Sixth, Christ calls His successful pursuer to go to the cross that the self might be broken and the natural man might be terminated. Seventh, the lover of Christ is brought into the full realization of the flourishing riches of the resurrection of Christ by which she is encouraged and empowered. This corresponds with Philippians 3:10—to be conformed to Christ's death by the power of His resurrection. After passing through the above stages, the lover of Christ is worthy of God's economy. At this juncture she is seen as one who is

moving with God and united with Christ. We may talk about God's economy and yet not be in it because we are not the proper kind of persons.

A PILLAR OF SMOKE

Song of Songs 3:6 says, "Who is she who comes up from the wilderness / Like pillars of smoke?" Such an illustration is used only twice in the entire Bible. Exodus 14 refers to God as the pillar of cloud who brought Israel out of Egypt unto Himself for the fulfillment of His economy. Now in Song of Songs the seeker of Christ has become like a pillar of smoke. She is spiritual and steady, unshakable, so she is qualified to move with God.

After this vision Song of Songs presents two other signs of the lover of Christ. One is the bed in the night during the wartime (3:7-8). The other is the palanquin in the day for the celebration of the victory in war (vv. 9-10). Following this there is a call for the daughters of Jerusalem to come to see Solomon in his bridal love (v. 11).

At this point the seeker of Christ has passed through the cross and entered into resurrection. In resurrection she has been transformed to be a spiritual person, not a physical person; she is like smoke, but she is a pillar that can stand on the earth touching the heavens. In experience she has become God. This is the experience of God becoming man that man may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead. She is a spiritual person standing on the earth as a ladder, bringing heaven to earth and joining earth to heaven (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51). The heaven needs her and the earth also needs her. All of Christ's believers, His members, should be like Him. He is the pillar, the ladder, that brings heaven to earth and joins earth to heaven. We should be the same. We should be unshakable and spiritual like God, who is Spirit.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:17 says, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Paul was qualified to be such a pillar. When we study Paul's Epistles, we sense that this man was just like God. He was a spiritual man, not a natural, soulish man nor a fleshly or fleshy man. Because he was such a person, like God, he was the only writer of the New Testament to touch the economy of God. In 1 Timothy 1:3-4 he exhorts Timothy to charge certain ones not to teach different things from God's economy. Then in Ephesians 1:10 he says that in the economy of the fullness of the times, all things would be headed up in Christ. In Ephesians 3:8-9 he also says that he had been charged to announce

the unsearchable riches of Christ to the nations and to enlighten all to see God's economy.

A BED FOR REST

By passing through the adequate process of transformation, the lover of Christ is worthy to be involved in God's economy, to move with God. She is linked to God and united with Christ as one. In this union with Christ she is likened to a bed for rest in the night during the wartime. Christ cannot have rest without her. Song of Songs 3:7 says, "There is Solomon's bed; / Sixty mighty men surround it, / Of the mighty men of Israel." She is among the sixty mighty men, indicating that she is a leading overcomer, fighting for Christ in order to keep Christ at rest during the night, even in a time of war. What a comfort and a joy she is to the Lord! In typology night signifies the church age. In the church age Christ needs the overcomers so that He may have a resting place.

THE PALANQUIN

After the church age there will be the age of the kingdom, an age of triumphant glory. Christ in the age of the church fought and gained the victory over all the enemies. But He needs another age, the kingdom age, for Him to celebrate His victory, His triumph. In the kingdom age everything concerning Christ is triumphant. In the church age the lover of Christ is a bed to Christ in the night during the time of war. But in the kingdom age she will be a palanquin for Christ's triumphant celebration.

CHRIST'S ESPOUSAL AND MARRIAGE LIFE

Song of Songs 3:11 says, "Go forth, O daughters of Zion, / And look at King Solomon with the crown / With which his mother crowned him / On the day of his espousals, / Yes, on the day of the gladness of his heart." The mother crowned Solomon on the day of his espousals. This refers to the day of Christ's engagement.

The subject of the entire Bible is a romance between God and His elect. John 3:16 says that God so loved the world. The world here is fallen mankind. In eternity God fell in love with man, so He made a choice. He selected some

among men to be His sons (Eph. 1:4-5). The entire Bible is consistent in speaking about one thing—God’s economy. The content of God’s economy in brief is God falling in love with His chosen man. This is the subject of the entire Bible.

One day God became a man to court man. Incarnation was God’s courtship. When a man courts a woman, he does not come to her in his original way. Instead, he makes himself “another person” so that he can reach and gain her. God’s courting was in the same way. In His courtship God did not remain in His original form; He became incarnated. Incarnation was a “mother” who gave Christ, her Son, a crown, a treasure, that is, His humanity.

As Christ’s human wife transformed into His divinity, we are a part of Christ’s crown. He was God becoming a man by incarnation. We are fallen men becoming part of Christ by transformation. God did not court us in His original form. He was incarnated to be a man. We respond to His courtship not by our original man but by our regenerated, transformed man. Proverbs 12:4 says, “A worthy woman is the crown of her husband.”

Christ’s espousal lasts from the day of incarnation through the entire church age. The church age is an age of “dating.” Christ’s wife then becomes a palanquin to Him for His triumphant celebration in the kingdom age. The kingdom ministry of Christ is to terminate all the opposers of God on the negative side. But on the positive side it is to make an exhibition of Christ, to celebrate His glorious triumph. In the kingdom age the overcomers will be Christ’s palanquin. The celebration of Christ’s victory is His thousand-year wedding day (Rev. 19:7-8). His marriage life will be the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity (21:1—22:5). The New Jerusalem is the wife of the Lamb. Christ became a man to be the small Lamb, a humble figure, but the New Jerusalem is a great figure. That will be the Lamb glorified, exhibited, and celebrated triumphantly in an eternal marriage life.

Here we can see three ages: the church age, the kingdom age, and the eternal age. In the church age we are betrothed to Christ. Our wedding day will be the kingdom age of one thousand years. Then our marriage life will be in the New Jerusalem for eternity. These three ages are the story of the union of Christ’s lovers with Him. The entire Bible is a condensed photo of this divine romance. Song of Songs is an abridged form of this romance, and the Bible is the entire revelation.

A CONCLUDING WORD

After the lover of Christ has experienced the breaking of her self, her natural man, by the cross of Christ and after she has seen the flourishing riches of Christ's resurrection by which she was empowered and encouraged, she became a spiritual, steady person signified by the unshakable pillar of smoke, the same as God was to the children of Israel in their exodus from Egypt to the wilderness. Thus, she was linked to God in His moving for the accomplishment of His economy and united with Christ in His three prominent attainments:

(1) His marvelous victory over all the enemies of God in the church age, signified by a bed in the night with sixty mighty men during the war. She is the bed, and Christ is the sleeper in the bed. This implies the union, the oneness, of the lover with Christ.

(2) His glorious triumph in His kingdom, signified by the palanquin in the day in the triumphant glory.

(3) In His espousal and marriage life. His espousal began from the time of incarnation, when incarnation as His mother crowned Him with His humanity, and goes through the church age in which all His believers are espoused to Him as virgins (2 Cor. 11:2). Christ's espousal and marriage life cover the church age, the kingdom age, and the eternal age. In the church age Christ has been fighting. This is the time of His espousal. In 2 Corinthians Paul was fighting, and at the same time he was betrothing the believers to Christ. He fought to gain us. Even Paul's fighting was a part of God's "dating." When we preach the gospel, we go out to represent God in His "dating" of His selected sinners.

Christ's espousal also includes His wedding in the kingdom for one thousand years (Rev. 19:7-8). Ultimately, His marriage life will be in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity (21:1—22:5). The bed in the night (signifying the church age), the palanquin in the day (signifying the kingdom age), and the marriage life in the ages all refer to the one lover of Christ—the Shulammite. Eventually, the New Jerusalem will be a corporate Shulammite, including all of God's chosen and redeemed people.

This is the significance of moving with God and being united with Christ. Today we should be people linked to God in His moving in union with Christ and eventually united with Christ in His victory over the enemies in His celebration in the kingdom age and in His eternal marriage life, that is, the New Jerusalem.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LIVING IN ASCENSION

Scripture Reading: S. S. 4:6-9

OUTLINE

- I. After the lover of Christ has experienced Christ in His sweet death and His fragrant resurrection, she determines to stay in the sweet death of Christ (the mountain of myrrh) and His fragrant resurrection (the hill of frankincense) until her Beloved comes back when the day dawns and the shadows flee away—S. S. 4:6.
- II. At this juncture her Beloved calls her to live in His ascension, as He called her to join with His cross in 2:14:
 - A. To look from His ascension (Lebanon)—4:8a:
 - 1. Here is the truth, the reality, of the consummated Triune God, the all-inclusive Christ with His complete redemption, and the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving, sevenfold intensified Spirit (Amana).
 - 2. Here the fighting is over, signified by “soft armor” (Senir).
 - 3. Here is the destruction of all the enemies (Hermon).
 - B. To look from the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12), signified by the lions’ dens and the leopards’ mountains—S. S. 4:8b:
 - 1. Here are Satan and his subordinates—Eph. 6:12; 2:2.
 - 2. Here the believers fight with Satan and his power of darkness—6:12:
 - a. By being empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength—v. 10.
 - b. By putting on the whole armor of God—vv. 11a, 13a.
 - c. By standing against the stratagems of the devil—v. 11b.
 - d. By receiving the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit (the word of God)—v. 17.
 - e. By praying always in spirit—v. 18a.
 - f. For the building up of the Body of Christ and the spreading of the gospel—vv. 18b-20.

In the previous chapter we saw that we need to be those who are moving with God and united with Christ. A pursuer and follower of Christ should be one who moves with God on earth. We can be such people only by being united with Christ. We have to be impressed that it is only when we are united with Christ that we can move with God.

Our union with Christ is seen in Song of Songs in a threefold way: a bed, a palanquin, and a couple. The bed is for the wartime, the palanquin is for the daytime, and the couple is for the day of exhibition. Eventually, the New Jerusalem as a couple is for God's expression. The Bible reveals that God became a man to court us. Now He wants us to court Him by our becoming divine for His expression.

We have seen that incarnation as a mother crowned her Son with humanity. This shows how much the Triune God treasures man. Eventually, we, the wife of the Son, need to be transformed in our humanity so that we can be a crown to Him. Here are two crowns concerning Christ the Son. First, Christ Himself at the time of incarnation received a crown; that was His humanity. Eventually, He will have a human wife transformed into His divinity, and this wife will become a crown to Him.

FOUR CONDITIONS IN WHICH CHRIST IS ENJOYED BY US

The death, resurrection, ascension, and Spirit of Christ are not merely objective, having nothing to do with us. Actually, all of these are Christ Himself. Death, resurrection, ascension, and the Spirit are the four conditions in which Christ is enjoyed by us.

To die with Christ is to enjoy Christ in His death. To experience the death of Christ is one thing, but to experience Christ in His sweet death is another thing. If you have Christ, you have His sweet death. He and His sweet death are one. He is always in His sweet death for our enjoyment. Most Christians know that Christ died for us objectively on the cross, but who realizes that we have to die with Christ subjectively in order to enjoy Him? Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). This is to enjoy the crucified Christ.

To be resurrected with Him is to enjoy the resurrected life-giving Christ. To live in ascension is to enjoy Christ in the condition of ascension. We need to live in ascension as God's new creation in resurrection. If we enjoy Christ in ascension, we also enjoy Him in resurrection as God's new creation. Ascension, God's new creation, and resurrection are one. Christ is not only in the conditions of His death, resurrection, and ascension but also in the condition of the life-giving Spirit. He is the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit of Jesus Christ to us. Where the Spirit is, Christ is, and it is in this Spirit that we enjoy Christ.

DETERMINING TO STAY IN CHRIST'S SWEET DEATH AND FRAGRANT RESURRECTION

After the lover of Christ has experienced Christ in His sweet death and His fragrant resurrection, she determines to stay in the sweet death of Christ (the mountain of myrrh) and His fragrant resurrection (the hill of frankincense) until her Beloved comes back when the day dawns and the shadows flee away (S. S. 4:6). If we have Christ, we have His sweet death because He and His death are one. If we determine to stay in Christ, He is in His sweet death and in His fragrant resurrection. This is to enjoy Christ, to experience Christ. But we cannot experience Christ's death and resurrection as something separate and apart from Christ. God in His economy does not want us to experience something of Christ. Instead, He determined that we have to enjoy Christ Himself in many things. The lover in Song of Songs did not care whether her Beloved was with her or not, as long as she remained on the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. However, if we are in Christ, if we have Christ with us, we will be in His death, resurrection, and ascension. Colossians 2:16-17 reveals that Christ is the reality of all positive things.

THE CALL TO LIVE IN ASCENSION

At this juncture her Beloved calls her to live in His ascension, as He had called her to remain in His cross. In Song of Songs 2:14 He called her to be with Him in the clefts of the rock and in the covert of the precipice. Now He calls her again to be with Him in His ascension instead of remaining on the mountain of myrrh and on the hill of frankincense.

To Look from His Ascension

Song of Songs 4:8 says, “Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; / With me from Lebanon come. / Look from the top of Amana, / From the top of Senir and Hermon, / From the lions’ dens, / From the leopards’ mountains.” Lebanon signifies ascension. In Christ’s ascension there are the positive peaks of reality, victory, and the destruction of the enemy. Amana means “truth, reality.” This is the truth, the reality, of the consummated Triune God; the all-inclusive Christ with His complete redemption; and the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving, sevenfold intensified Spirit. These realities are the three of the Triune God. Senir means “soft armor,” signifying that the war is over and victory has been gained. We do not need to wear the hard armor to fight. Satan is the defeated foe. We do not need to fight, because he has been defeated already (Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:15). We are now wearing the soft armor to enjoy our victory in Christ. Hermon means “destruction.” In ascension the enemy is destroyed.

To Look from the Heavenlies, Signified by the Lions’ Dens and the Leopards’ Mountains

With Christ Satan is a defeated foe, but with us he is still a troublesome one. Therefore, Ephesians 6 says that we need to wrestle with the evil one. Christ calls us to look from the heavenlies (v. 12), signified by the lions’ dens and the leopards’ mountains (S. S. 4:8b). Here are Satan and his subordinates (Eph. 6:12; 2:2). Here the believers fight with Satan and his power of darkness (6:12) by being empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength (v. 10), by putting on the whole armor of God (vv. 11a, 13a), by standing against the stratagems of the devil (v. 11b), by receiving the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, the word of God (v. 17), and by praying always in spirit (v. 18a) for the building up of the Body of Christ and the spreading of the gospel (vv. 18b-20). This is the reality of living in the ascension of Christ.

KNOWING CHRIST IN HIS DEATH, RESURRECTION, ASCENSION, AND SPIRIT

For us to experience Christ we must see that the death, resurrection, ascension, and Spirit of Christ are one group. When I was a young Christian, I

read some books which said that I had to be crucified with Christ, but I did not know how I could crucify myself. One day Brother Nee said that death by crucifixion can never be carried out by ourselves as suicide. There must be others who do the crucifying. Romans 8:13 says, "If by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." According to this verse, we put to death the activities of the body not by ourselves but by the Spirit. Thus, it is by the Spirit that we crucify ourselves. Today, according to the New Testament, the Spirit is in our spirit (v. 16).

To know Christ in His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His bountiful Spirit, we need to see that these four things are one. Death is a condition in which Christ died for us and with us, and resurrection is a condition in which Christ was resurrected by God from the dead to release the divine life. If we have Christ in these conditions, we enjoy Him. It is the same with ascension and the Spirit. We cannot separate Christ from His ascension or from the life-giving Spirit. Christ is the life-giving Spirit. If He were separate from the life-giving Spirit, He would no longer be pneumatic. We can live in ascension by living in the pneumatic Christ, the Christ who is the Spirit in our spirit.

In the Lord's recovery our reading and studying of the Bible are unique. When we come to the Bible, we exercise our spirit to contact the Lord Himself in His Word by both reading and praying. We pray-read the Bible to receive life, light, and revelation from the Spirit in our spirit. This is our way of studying the Bible. If we practice this way of studying, every verse will become meaningful. Because of this, what we have learned of the Lord over these many years is altogether new.

CHAPTER NINE

BECOMING A GARDEN TO CHRIST

Scripture Reading: S. S. 4:12—5:1; 6:2-3

OUTLINE

- I. Through her living in Christ's ascension as the new creation in resurrection, the lover of Christ becomes mature in the riches of the life of Christ so that she becomes a garden to Christ—S. S. 4:12-15:
 - A. Enclosed with a spring shut up and a fountain sealed for Christ's private enjoyment—v. 12.
 - B. Full of the choicest fruit and the chief spices with their beauty and fragrance—vv. 13-14.
 - C. Having a fountain and a well of living water, which are streams from the resurrection and ascension life—v. 15.
 - D. She expects the cold north wind to awake and the hot south wind to come blowing upon her garden so that her spices may flow forth—v. 16a.
 - E. She wants her Beloved to come into His garden and eat His choicest fruit—v. 16b.
 - II. The Beloved has come into His garden, which is His sister and bride—5:1; 6:2:
 - A. He has gathered His myrrh with His spice—5:1a.
 - B. He has eaten His honeycomb with His honey and drunk His wine with His milk—v. 1b.
 - C. He invites His beloved friends, the Triune God, to eat and drink deeply with Him—v. 1c.
 - D. He has gone down to the beds of spices to feed in the gardens (referring to the lover and other lovers of Christ) and gather lilies—6:2.
 - III. She realizes:
 - A. That she is Christ's and that Christ is hers.
 - B. That Christ pastures His churches among His seekers as lilies—v. 3.
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THE DIVINE-HUMAN ROMANCE

God Becoming a Man

In God's romance He desires to be one with man. He carried this out by becoming the same as man. God, because of His heart's desire, became a man in incarnation, and He contacted man by the way of a romance. Before God opened up in the New Testament what was on His heart, both angels and men did not know what God was doing (Eph. 3:9). They did not realize that their God was becoming a Husband to marry a wife. This Husband was divine, and the wife He was going to marry was human.

Song of Songs is a romance between a great king and a country girl. However, these two do not match each other. In the same way, how could God with divinity marry a wife with humanity? They do not match. It must have been difficult for Solomon, the top king on the whole earth, to court a common country girl. If he had come to visit her in all his kingly glory, she would have been afraid of him. Therefore, the king became a "country man" in order to go to her village to court her, to gain her love. On the one hand, he made himself the same as the country girl; on the other hand, he made the country girl a queen. This is a type of the story of God's romance with man. He would marry a human being, just like the king would marry a country girl. God, in order to court us, to gain us in a personal and affectionate way, became a lowly man with humanity.

Uplifting His Humanity into Divinity

Although God became a lowly man, His intention was not to remain a lowly man for eternity. His intention was to bring His humanity up to the level of His divinity. Romans 1:3-4 tells us that our Savior is of two sources: the flesh and the Spirit. According to the flesh, He was out of the seed of David. For Him to become flesh was like Solomon's going to the countryside as a "country man" to gain a wife. God made Himself a man in the flesh. Then in His resurrection He uplifted His humanity into His divinity according to the Spirit of holiness, and in His humanity He was designated the Son of God. He had the capacity to uplift His humanity into His divinity because He was of two sources: the source of the flesh, humanity, and the source of the Spirit of holiness, divinity. Humanity surely cannot pull down divinity. Instead, His divinity uplifted His humanity into His divinity.

Through the divine power in the Spirit of holiness, Jesus' humanity was uplifted into the divine sonship, into divinity. By this He was born of God not as God's only begotten Son but as God's firstborn Son (8:29), which indicates that many sons would follow. Today our Christ is God in the divine sense and man in the human sense. He is a God-man. We need to stress that our God is not only God but also a man. We wrote a hymn that says, "Lo! in heaven Jesus sitting, / Christ the Lord is there enthroned; / As the man by God exalted, / With God's glory He is crowned" (*Hymns*, #132).

Regenerating and Transforming His Chosen Ones to Make Them His Bride

This God-man is the Bridegroom in the divine, universal romance (John 3:29), but His counterpart, being merely human, still does not match Him. A human without a divine source cannot be the counterpart of the God-man. Therefore, God regenerated His human elect. Regeneration is to put divinity into humanity, to uplift humanity to the standard of divinity. However, regeneration does not complete the process. We were regenerated in our spirit, but we are not only a spirit. We are even more a soul. In order to uplift our entire being, God first has to regenerate our spirit and then transform our soul. The transformation of our soul takes time.

In the romance in Song of Songs, we can see the process through which the seeker passes in order to be transformed. In chapter 4 Christ's lover has been brought to live in His ascension (v. 8) as God's new creation. She is no longer of Adam, who never lived in ascension. Now as a descendant of Adam, she has been transformed to be another person to live in ascension as the new creation of God in resurrection. As I am speaking these things, I realize that I am speaking another language, a heavenly language. We must learn this language, the language of the divine-human romance in the whole universe. When the seeker is living in ascension, she and Christ are living in one condition, the condition of ascension, to be a couple. Christ is divine and human, and His transformed lover is human and divine. They are the same in life and nature, perfectly matching each other.

Through her living in Christ's ascension as the new creation in resurrection for her growth in life and transformation by life, Christ's transformed bride becomes four things: a garden to satisfy Christ (4:12—5:1; 6:2-3), God's dwelling place with its protection (v. 4a), the heavenly bodies as the universal

light (v. 10a), and a terrible army, which is the corporate overcomer—the Shulammite (vv. 4b, 10b, 13). This Shulammite, who is the duplication of Solomon, is a figure of the New Jerusalem. Revelation reveals that the overcomers will be collectively a bride to marry Christ. In 17:14 and 19:11-21 we see that following their wedding this bride will become an army to fight with Christ, her Husband, to defeat Antichrist, a human opponent to God, with all his human followers. Antichrist with all his human followers will be absolutely defeated by the bride helping her Husband, who will cast them into the lake of fire.

BECOMING MATURE IN THE RICHES OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST TO BECOME A GARDEN TO CHRIST

Through her living in Christ's ascension as the new creation in resurrection, the lover of Christ becomes mature in the riches of the life of Christ so that she becomes a garden to Christ (S. S. 4:12-15).

For Christ's Private Enjoyment

This garden is enclosed with a spring shut up and a fountain sealed for Christ's private enjoyment (v. 12). The spring is the Spirit of life and is seen in Revelation 22:1 as the river of water of life. The fountain is the source of the spring, which is God's throne. The sealed fountain is for Christ's private enjoyment. As seeking Christians, in experiencing Christ we must have something private, hidden, shut up, and sealed that is just for Christ. This is different from the practice of Pentecostalism, in which everything is on the surface for open exhibition and hardly anything is sealed. We must have something sealed for the One whom we love the most.

Full of the Choicest Fruit and the Chief Spices

The garden is also full of the choicest fruit and the chief spices with their beauty and fragrance (S. S. 4:13-14). A rich garden grows many kinds of plants, which produce fruit and are full of fragrance and color. This becomes the lover's beauty to the Lord. Eventually, this holy garden becomes the green couch (1:16b) for the lover and Christ to live together in mutual rest and

enjoyment. The lover of Christ is now rich in life, producing fruits to nourish and refresh, giving forth sweet fragrances, and displaying beautiful colors to become a restful couch of green for Christ's rest and enjoyment.

Having a Fountain and a Well of Living Water

In the garden are a fountain and a well of living water, which are streams from the resurrection and ascension life (4:15). The fountain and the spring stream out from the overcomers. They flow out from what they are and from where they are. We need to be such people in resurrection and ascension, flowing with the essence, the flavor, the fruit, and the beauty of resurrection and ascension.

Expecting the North Wind and the South Wind to Blow upon Her Garden

The lover of Christ expects the cold north wind to awake and the hot south wind to come blowing upon her garden so that her spices may flow forth (v. 16a). The wind from the north is cold and harsh, but this causes the apple trees to give forth the best fragrance. If she has only the north wind, everything will die. There is also the need for the hot south wind to come and blow upon her garden so that her spices may flow forth. The flowing forth comes from these two kinds of winds. No one likes to be sick, but sometimes our days of sickness produce a very positive result. On the other hand, our easy days may produce a bad result. It is not easy to say, "Awake, O north wind; / And come, O south wind!" (v. 16a). We have to learn of the lover of Christ in Song of Songs to appreciate both kinds of winds.

Her Desire for Her Beloved to Come into His Garden

Her desire is for her Beloved to come into His garden and eat His choicest fruit (v. 16b). The goal is that she would become a garden to meet her Beloved's need.

THE BELOVED HAVING COME INTO HIS GARDEN,

HIS SISTER AND BRIDE

The Beloved has come into His garden, which is His sister and bride (5:1; 6:2). He has gathered His myrrh with His spice (5:1a). He has eaten His honeycomb with His honey and drunk His wine with His milk (v. 1b). The garden is the Bridegroom's garden. He is eating His own things, and He invites His beloved friends, the Triune God, to eat and drink deeply with Him (v. 1c). The Bridegroom, Christ, the Son in the Divine Trinity, invites His beloved friends, God the Father and God the Spirit, to enjoy His garden. Furthermore, He has gone down to the beds of spices to feed in the gardens (referring to the lover and other lovers of Christ) and gather lilies (6:2).

THE SEEKER'S REALIZATION

At this point the lover of Christ remembers her source. She realizes that she is Christ's and that Christ is hers. She says, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (v. 3a). This is their private and affectionate love. She also realizes that Christ pastures His churches among His seekers as lilies (v. 3b). Those who are lilies have lives of trusting in God and looking unto God with a single eye. This is different from the thorns. In chapter 2 Christ appraised the lover as a lily living among thorns (v. 2). All the worldly people today are thorns who hurt others, but the lilies suffer all ill-treatment while trusting in God and looking unto Him with a single eye.

CHAPTER TEN

BECOMING THE SANCTUARY OF GOD

Scripture Reading: S. S. 6:4a

OUTLINE

- I. Through her living in Christ's ascension as the new creation in resurrection, the lover of Christ becomes mature in the riches of the life of Christ so that she becomes not only a garden to Christ but also the sanctuary of God, signified by Tirzah, and its safeguard, signified by Jerusalem.
- II. To become a garden to Christ is to be flourishing in the element of Christ's life with its unsearchable riches; to become the sanctuary of God is to be built up (related to the building of the Body of Christ) in the growth with the life of Christ with its unsearchable riches (Eph. 4:15-16):
 - A. The sanctuary of God is divided by the veil into two sections: the outer Holy Place and the inner Holy of Holies.
 - B. Although the sanctuary of God is in the heavens, it is divided into two sections by the veil, which signifies our flesh (Heb. 10:19-20).
 - C. With Christ, the veil in the sanctuary of God was split (Matt. 27:51), but with the believers it still remains for the purpose of God's dealing with them.
 - D. The apostle Paul became mature in the life of Christ, living in the ascension of Christ, yet God still let him have a thorn in his flesh through a messenger of Satan to keep him from being exceedingly lifted up (2 Cor. 12:7).
 - E. In God's economy God first regenerates us in our spirit with His resurrection life (1 Pet. 1:3) and second renews us, transforms us, and conforms us in our soul through His resurrection life to the image of His firstborn Son, Christ as the first God-man (Titus 3:5; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29), but leaves our body to be redeemed progressively through our whole Christian life (2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 8:11, 13) and ultimately transfigured to be conformed to the body of Christ's glory at His coming back (Phil. 3:21).
 - F. Hence, there is still the need of the Lord's ultimate calling of us to live within the veil through a stronger experience of the cross in dealing

with our flesh after our experience of His resurrection as the new creation of God.

- G. After the lover of Christ pursued Him for satisfaction and attained it in the first section of the book, the Lord first called her to be delivered from her self by experiencing His cross when she was secluded by introspection; then the Lord called her further to live in His ascension as the new creation of God in resurrection; now ultimately the Lord calls her to live within the veil in the Holy of Holies, God Himself, to enjoy the consummated God embodied in Christ.
- H. It is here that all the seekers of Christ who live in the Holy of Holies, the consummated Triune God, within the veil, enjoy the hidden Christ in His hidden life supply (signified by the manna in the golden pot), the resurrection life (signified by the budding rod), and the inner law of life (signified by the tablets of the covenant), hidden in the Ark within the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:4), to the fullest extent.

THE CONSUMMATION OF THE SEEKER'S TRANSFORMATION

After reaching the point where she is called to live in ascension, the seeker of Christ has reached her highest attainment. In her attainment she becomes four wonderful things as the consummation of her transformation: a garden, a sanctuary, the heavenly bodies, and a terrible army with the overcomer, the Shulammite, who is the reproduction of Christ, as the leader. Her becoming a garden is not as high or as deep as her becoming a sanctuary with a safeguard, that is, the holy city, Jerusalem. She becomes such a building, which is God's dwelling place with a city surrounding it to be its safeguard.

Song of Songs 6:4 says, "You are as beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, / As lovely as Jerusalem, / As terrible as an army with banners." Tirzah eventually had a black background because at the division of the kingdom it became the capital city for the kings of Israel, the place of the king's palace (1 Kings 14:17; 15:21, 33; 16:6, 8-9, 15, 17). But Song of Songs mentions Tirzah in a positive sense as being noted for its beauty. Of course, a number of positive types and figures in the Old Testament have a black background. Adam is a type of Christ as the Head of man, and he had a background of failure. David is a type of Christ as the victorious King, and he also had a background of failure. Although Tirzah

had a black background when the kingdom was divided, the seeker is praised for being as lovely as Tirzah, in a positive sense.

BECOMING MATURE IN THE RICHES OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Through her living in Christ's ascension as the new creation in resurrection, the lover of Christ becomes mature in the riches of the life of Christ so that she becomes not only a garden to Christ but also the sanctuary of God, signified by Tirzah, and its safeguard, signified by Jerusalem. To be mature in the life of Christ is a great thing. The seeker is likened to two buildings. One is the palace of the king. The other is the city surrounding the palace as its safeguard.

A garden cannot be compared with a palace and a city. A garden is just a visiting place for the king, but it is not the dwelling place where the king lives or the city that safeguards the king's palace. To be a garden is very good, but it is not sufficient. We have to reach the highest peak, the building of God.

BECOMING THE SANCTUARY OF GOD BY BEING BUILT UP IN THE GROWTH WITH THE LIFE OF CHRIST

To become a garden to Christ is to be flourishing in the element of Christ's life with its unsearchable riches; to become the sanctuary of God is to be built up (related to the building of the Body of Christ) in the growth with the life of Christ with its unsearchable riches (Eph. 4:15-16). In the Old Testament the building of God is typified by Tirzah and Jerusalem; in the New Testament this building is the organic Body of Christ. The organic Body of Christ is also Christ's wife (5:25-32). Furthermore, the organic Body of Christ consummates, completes, the building of the New Jerusalem.

The Bible's divine revelation is very consistent. It begins with the creation of man with a spirit, with the tree of life (Gen. 2:7, 9), and with a garden that has a flow of water with three precious materials—gold, bdellium, and precious stones (vv. 10-12). Eventually, a woman comes out of Adam, built to be his counterpart, his wife (v. 22). This woman is also the body of Adam. This gives us a complete picture as a map for our driving through the Bible.

The Sanctuary Being Divided into Two Sections by the Veil, Signifying Our Flesh

The sanctuary of God is divided by the veil into two sections: the outer Holy Place and the inner Holy of Holies. Although the sanctuary of God is in the heavens, it is divided into two sections by the veil, which signifies our flesh (Heb. 10:19-20). In God's economy, such a marvelous thing—the sanctuary of God—has a negative thing—our flesh.

The Veil Remaining with the Believers

With Christ the veil in the sanctuary of God was split (Matt. 27:51), but with the believers it still remains for the purpose of God's dealing with them.

God Allowing Paul to Have a Thorn in the Flesh

The apostle Paul became mature in the life of Christ, living in the ascension of Christ, yet God still let him have a thorn in his flesh through a messenger of Satan to keep him from being exceedingly lifted up (2 Cor. 12:7). Paul received exceedingly great revelations from the Lord, and he wrote fourteen Epistles in the New Testament. In this sense, no one besides the Lord Jesus can compare with Paul. Because of the transcendence of the revelations that he received, Paul could not avoid being proud, so the Lord gave him a thorn, a messenger of Satan, to subdue him. If the apostle Paul could not avoid being proud by receiving so many revelations, who among us can avoid becoming proud? Paul prayed three times that the suffering of the thorn would be removed, but the Lord responded by saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness" (v. 9). The Lord's sufficient grace is the overshadowing power of resurrection. This grace is actually the Lord Himself. The Lord indicated that Paul would enjoy Him as grace more than ever. Thus, Paul boasted in his weaknesses, not in the revelations he had received, so that the sufficient grace as the power of resurrection might overshadow his weakness.

The Process of Our Salvation in God's Economy

In God's economy God first regenerates us in our spirit with His resurrection life (1 Pet. 1:3) and second renews us, transforms us, and conforms us in our soul through His resurrection life to the image of His firstborn Son, Christ as the first God-man (Titus 3:5; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29). However, He leaves our body to be redeemed progressively through our whole Christian life (2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 8:11, 13) and ultimately transfigured to be conformed to the body of Christ's glory at His coming back (Phil. 3:21). We, the descendants of Adam, can become the "twins" of Christ, the firstborn Son of God, by transformation. Ephesians 4:30 says that the Spirit seals us unto, or for, the day of the redemption of our body. Day by day the sealing of the Spirit is going on. That sealing is the dispensing of the transforming Spirit as the sealing ink. The sealing Spirit dispenses all the elements of Christ progressively, little by little, into our being. Ultimately, our body will be transfigured to be conformed to the body of Christ's glory at His coming back.

The Need of the Lord's Ultimate Calling

Hence, there is still the need of the Lord's ultimate calling of us to live within the veil through a stronger experience of the cross in dealing with our flesh after our experience of His resurrection as the new creation of God. Logically, after we experience Christ's resurrection, we should not need to go back to deal with the flesh. But in our actual experience we need to go back because our flesh is still with us. Often I find that the biggest hindrance frustrating me from doing God's perfect will is the flesh. Thus, the flesh needs a stronger cross.

Brother Nee's interpretation of Song of Songs includes these two calls to the cross: the call for the cross to break the self (S. S. 2:14) and the call for a stronger cross to deal with the flesh in a deeper sense. The self becomes a secluding wall of introspection that secludes the Lord's seeker from the presence of Christ. Thus, there is the need for the seeker to remain in the cross by the power of Christ's resurrection to be delivered from the self. Later, we see that in the sanctuary there is the veil of the flesh. Thus, there is the need of the highest calling to experience a stronger cross to deal with our existing flesh. This is according to the understanding of the hidden, intrinsic significance of the book.

We find this out in our marriage life. Who can live in their marriage life without their self being the center? This is why we have to be called to go to the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice and remain there. Furthermore, marriage life exposes our flesh. This is why we need a stronger cross. Brother Nee's interpretation, no doubt, depends upon his understanding of the intrinsic situation of this romance.

Through these two steps of the cross's dealing, we become God's sanctuary. This sanctuary is the Holiest of all, which is God Himself. When we enter into the Holiest of all, we enter into God. Then we become the sanctuary. In this sense we become God. Later, we will see that the Shulammite becomes a duplication of Solomon. That is a figure of us as the reproduction of Christ, who is the embodiment of God. Thus, the many lovers of Christ eventually will become duplications of God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. This is the fulfillment of God becoming a man that man might become God, which is the high peak of the divine revelation.

In John 14:23 the Lord Jesus said that He and the Father would come to the one who loves Him to make this lover God's abode. This is the mutual abode of God and man. Ephesians 3:17 says that Christ today is making His home in our hearts. These verses prove that the very God whom we are pursuing is making us His duplication. To make us His duplication means to make us His dwelling place, His Holy of Holies.

Enjoying the Hidden Christ

After the lover of Christ pursued Him for satisfaction and attained it in the first section of the book, the Lord first called her to be delivered from her self by experiencing His cross when she was secluded by introspection; then the Lord called her further to live in His ascension as the new creation of God in resurrection; now ultimately the Lord calls her to live within the veil in the Holy of Holies, God Himself, to enjoy the consummated God embodied in Christ. It is here that all the seekers of Christ who live in the Holy of Holies, the consummated Triune God, within the veil, enjoy the hidden Christ in His hidden life supply (signified by the manna in the golden pot), the resurrection life (signified by the budding rod), and the inner law of life (signified by the tablets of the covenant), hidden in the Ark within the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:4), to the fullest extent.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BECOMING THE HEAVENLY BODIES

Scripture Reading: S. S. 6:10a

OUTLINE

- I. Through her living in the ascension of Christ and further living within the veil, experiencing the cross of Christ more strongly, the lover of Christ becomes the heavenly bodies:
 - A. The overcoming believers can be luminaries as the moon reflecting the light of the sun in the church age (Phil. 2:15).
 - B. The overcoming believers will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom age (Matt. 13:43; Dan. 12:3).
 - C. The people of God who produce the overcomers (the man-child) are clothed with the sun and have the moon underneath their feet (Rev. 12:1, 5).
- II. The lover of Christ becoming the moon and the sun indicates that she has become not only wholly spiritual but also absolutely heavenly and signifies that she has become an overcomer:
 - A. Overcoming the attraction of the world by being captivated by Christ in the first stage of this book.
 - B. Overcoming the self, which secluded her from the presence of Christ, by becoming one with the cross of Christ in the second stage of this book.
 - C. Overcoming the old creation by living in the ascension of Christ in resurrection after her self has been dealt with by the cross in the third stage of this book.
 - D. Overcoming the flesh, the natural man, the old man, by living within the veil.

Song of Songs is a book depicting the romance between God and man. The way in which Solomon wrote this book is marvelous. It is brief and in a very good sequence. The experience of Christ's lover is progressive. After the lover of Christ pursued Him for satisfaction and attained it in the first section, the

Lord called her to be delivered from her self by experiencing His cross; then He called her further to live in His ascension as the new creation of God in resurrection; and ultimately, the Lord called her to live within the veil in the Holy of Holies, in God Himself, to enjoy the consummated God embodied in Christ. The apostle Paul surely was a pattern of one who lived within the veil. When the Lord's seeker arrives at such a stage, she is likened first to a garden enclosed with a spring shut up and a fountain sealed for Christ's private enjoyment (4:12-15).

From a garden the lover progresses to become two earthly cities, Tirzah and Jerusalem (6:4a). These were two capitals. After the nation of Israel was divided, Jerusalem remained the capital of the kingdom of Judah, and Tirzah became the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 14:17; 15:21; 16:6). Tirzah was the dwelling place of the king, but it was related to a negative situation. But as we have seen, Song of Songs mentions Tirzah in a positive sense by saying that the seeker is as beautiful as Tirzah.

According to God's design in the Old Testament, the city of Jerusalem was built first, and then, under Solomon, the temple and the palace were built (1 Kings 6:1—7:1). The palace was the king's dwelling, and the temple was God's dwelling. In the Old Testament the palace and the temple were separate. Solomon as the king dwelt in the palace, and God dwelt in the temple. But we have to realize that Solomon's writing is eternal. In the eternal view the palace should not be separated from the temple, because both are God's dwelling. According to the reality and the fulfillment of the types in the New Testament, the palace and temple become one because God is the unique Dweller. God dwells in the temple, and as the ruling One, the great King, God resides in the palace. Tirzah is used here for God's palace. In the book *The Song of Songs* Brother Nee points out that Tirzah, where the king's palace was, signifies the heavenly sanctuary, the dwelling of God, and that Jerusalem signifies the heavenly Jerusalem, God's holy city as the safeguard of His palace.

The beloved likens his lover to a garden, a palace, and a city. All these are on the earth. Then suddenly Solomon jumps in his writing from the earth to the heavens. In Song of Songs 6:10 he likens his lover to the moon and to the sun, two heavenly bodies. In this chapter we want to see how the lover of Christ becomes an overcomer, typified by the heavenly bodies.

TRANSFORMED INTO THE HEAVENLY BODIES

Through her living in the ascension of Christ and further living within the veil, experiencing the cross of Christ more strongly, the lover of Christ is transformed into the heavenly bodies. In chapter 1 the lover was a horse, but after being transformed and maturing in the life of Christ, she is gradually and progressively transformed into a lily, a garden, a palace, and a city. Eventually, she becomes not only an earthly treasure but also the heavenly bodies.

The overcoming believers can be luminaries as the moon reflecting the light of the sun in the church age (Phil. 2:15). The overcoming believers will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom age (Matt. 13:43; Dan. 12:3). The people of God who produce the overcomers (the man-child) are clothed with the sun and have the moon underneath their feet (Rev. 12:1, 5). The woman in Revelation 12 signifies the aggregate of God's people on earth. This woman is the mother of the man-child, the overcomers. She is shining with the sun, the moon, and the stars. This view conveys the thought that God's chosen people should be heavenly and should shine brightly.

HAVING BECOME AN OVERCOMER

The lover of Christ becoming the moon and the sun indicates that she has become not only wholly spiritual but also absolutely heavenly and signifies that she has become an overcomer. In Song of Songs the lover of Christ eventually becomes a pillar of smoke (3:6); that is a figure showing that she is altogether spiritual. Then she becomes the moon and the sun, indicating that she is not only spiritual but also heavenly. As such a person, she has become an overcomer.

OVERCOMING IN STAGES

Overcoming the Attraction of the World

In Song of Songs the lover of Christ overcomes in stages. In the first stage of this book she overcomes the attraction of the world by being captivated by Christ. An overcomer should be attracted by Christ and even captivated by Him to give up the world to follow Him.

Overcoming the Self

Then the lover of Christ overcomes the self, which secluded her from the presence of Christ, by becoming one with the cross of Christ in the second stage of this book. This stage is the stage of experiencing the cross to deal with our self.

Overcoming the Old Creation

In the third stage of this book the seeker of Christ goes further to overcome the old creation by living in the ascension of Christ in resurrection after her self has been dealt with by the cross. The physical things of the world are a part of the old creation. A Christian who lives in the old creation cares for physical things, such as a big house, a nice car, and good clothes. If we desire the physical things of the world, we are living in the old creation. The old man cares for physical things, but we should be those who live in ascension as God's new creation in resurrection. When the lover of Christ lives in ascension, she has been dealt with in her self and has been dealt with by the Lord's calling to live not only in ascension but also within the veil. To live within the veil means that she has dealt with everything that is not God. Within the veil there is nothing but the Triune God Himself.

Overcoming the Flesh, the Natural Man, the Old Man

In the final stage the overcomer overcomes the flesh, the natural man, the old man, by living within the veil. Eventually, when we enter into the Holy of Holies, God's sanctuary, God's dwelling place, there is nothing there but the Triune God. It is here that all the seekers of Christ enjoy the hidden Christ as the hidden manna (the hidden life supply), the budding rod (the resurrection life), and the tablets of the covenant (the inner law of life), hidden in the Ark within the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:4), to the fullest extent. These hidden things are Christ's attributes, which are the attributes of God. In the process of transformation we are transformed with the Triune God's attributes. God's attributes are whatever God is. Transformation is to work God's attributes into our human virtues. The hidden manna in the golden pot is the Christ hidden in God's divine nature; the budding rod is no longer manifested but hidden within the Ark; and the tablets of the law are the hidden inner law, which is of life. These items refer to the highest, deepest, and most intrinsic

experiences of Christ revealed in the holy Word. We must admit that we are short in our experience of these things.

CHAPTER TWELVE

BECOMING A TERRIBLE ARMY AND THE SHULAMMITE

Scripture Reading: S. S. 6:4b, 10b, 13

OUTLINE

- I. Becoming a terrible army—S. S. 6:4b, 10b:
 - A. Since the overcoming believers have become the sanctuary of God and the heavenly bodies, they also become a terrible army:
 - 1. An army fights the battle for God's kingdom in the degradation of God's people to be the overcomers answering the Lord's call—Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21.
 - 2. A terrible army signifies that these overcomers of the Lord terrify God's enemy, Satan, and become terrible in the eyes of God's people.
 - B. *With banners* indicates that the overcomers are ready all the time to fight, and it is also a sign of victory.
- II. Becoming the Shulammite—S. S. 6:13:
 - A. *Shulammite* is the feminine form of *Solomon*, indicating that now the overcomers have become the same as Christ:
 - 1. The Shulammite was a country girl.
 - 2. Now, as a counterpart of Solomon, she has become the same as Solomon in life, in nature, in expression, and in function for the carrying out of God's economy.
 - B. This signifies that:
 - 1. The overcomers were sinners.
 - 2. Now, in the maturity of Christ's life, they have become the same as Christ in life, in nature, in expression, and in function for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy.

Ultimately, the lover becomes a terrible army with banners and the Shulammite (S. S. 6:4b, 10b, 13). At this point the lover of Christ has reached the stage of living not only in Christ's ascension but also within the veil. The

veil is the separation in God's dwelling place, His sanctuary. God's sanctuary is one, but it is separated by a veil. At one end is the Holy Place, and at the other end is the Holy of Holies where God Himself dwells in His Divine Trinity.

We know this because within the Ark in the Holy of Holies there were three items: the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the tablets of the law (Heb. 9:4). The hidden manna in the golden pot refers to God the Father as the divine source of all supply, and the budding rod signifies Christ as the resurrection. Among the three of the Divine Trinity, the second is the resurrection. Jesus said that He is the resurrection (John 11:25), the reality of the budding rod of Aaron. The tablets of the law refer to the Spirit of life as the inner law (Rom. 8:2). Thus, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are dwelling in the Holy of Holies. When we enter into the Holy of Holies, we enter into God and meet the Father as the source of supply, the Son as the resurrection, and the Spirit as the law of life.

As to Christ, the veil in the temple has been split in two, but as to us, God allows the veil to remain in order that we would be one with Him. The Holy of Holies is God Himself to be the overcomers' dwelling place, so these two should be one. In the figure of the lover as the bed in the night at wartime, the overcomer is Christ's resting place. Christ sleeps in that bed, so they two are one. Similarly, the lover as the palanquin and the Lord as the rider become one. In both figures Christ's lover becomes the dwelling place for Christ. However, when we enter within the veil, God becomes our dwelling place and we become the dweller. These illustrations indicate that we are in union with the Triune God.

BECOMING A TERRIBLE ARMY

At this point the lover is described as being as beautiful as Tirzah, as lovely as Jerusalem, and as terrible as an army with banners (S. S. 6:4). This indicates that when we become one with God to be God's dwelling place, we are as beautiful as Tirzah and as lovely as Jerusalem in the eyes of God. However, to the enemy this lover, this overcomer, is as terrible as an army with banners. Banners indicate a readiness to fight and also mean that the victory is won. An army without banners must be a defeated army. When she becomes as beautiful as the moon and as clear as the sun, she is also as terrible as an army with banners (v. 10).

When she becomes the garden, she is nothing more than a garden, but when she becomes Tirzah and Jerusalem, something is built up to show God's beauty and God's loveliness. At that time God's enemy trembles because this little country girl has become an army with banners. A terrible army signifies that these overcomers of the Lord terrify God's enemy, Satan, and become terrible in the eyes of God's people. An army fights the battle for God's kingdom in the degradation of God's people to be the overcomers answering the Lord's call (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

THE DANCE OF TWO ARMIES

After seeing such a high vision in Song of Songs, we may ask, "Who can be such persons?" In order to answer this we need an additional interpretation of 6:13b, which says, "Why should you gaze at the Shulammite, / As upon the dance of two camps?" By this time the Shulammite is like two camps, or armies, in the eyes of God. These two armies are dancing in celebration of their victory. The country girl eventually attained the status of the Shulammite. The name *Shulammite* is not mentioned in the beginning of Song of Songs. Only in 6:13 is her name mentioned in a very extraordinary way. In this verse the Shulammite is likened to two armies, or camps, dancing.

This phrase *two armies* in Hebrew is *Mahanaim*. This is not a common word; it is a historical name from the Old Testament in Genesis 32:2. Jacob decided to go back to his fathers' land when he could no longer stay with his uncle Laban, to whom he had fled from his brother Esau. By that time he had four wives and many children, servants, flocks, and herds. However, his twin brother Esau was still alive. Jacob was returning with the fear that Esau still wanted to kill him. As he journeyed with his family, there were no strong ones with him. There were only feeble ones, women and children. Jacob was very frightened at the prospect of meeting Esau. On the way "the angels of God met him," and Jacob said, "This is God's camp." So he "called the name of that place Mahanaim" (vv. 1-2).

After he saw the two armies of God, Jacob did a marvelous thing. He divided his wives, children, and the rest of his possessions into two groups, or "two armies." He thought that if his brother Esau attacked one group, the other group could escape being slaughtered. This is full of spiritual significance. These two groups are not just the singular army of God but "two

armies.” This means that we are more than conquerors. It also signifies a strong testimony. God does not want “giants.” He wants only the feeble ones, the weaker ones, the women and children. They can become His armies because the fighting is not in their hands but in His hands. He needs a people who are one with Him, a people who are submissive to Him, signified by the plaited hair (S. S. 1:11), and obedient to Him with a flexible will, signified by the neck with strings of jewels (v. 10).

When we consider how to arrive at the high peak of the revelation in Song of Songs, we should not trust in ourselves. We may think that because the apostle Paul was strong, he could do it. But the apostle Paul himself says that he was less than the least among the saints (Eph. 3:8). He says, “Who is weak, and I am not weak?” (2 Cor. 11:29). All of us, like the seeker in Song of Songs, are country girls. We were not born in a palace but in the countryside. For the country girl to become the Shulammite was Solomon’s doing. Solomon attracted, charmed, and captivated her. In Romans 9:16 Paul says, “It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.” We may think that we can run, but we cannot. It is Christ who can run. Paul also says, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20a).

Dear saints, when that day comes, all who are strong in themselves will be disqualified. Those who are counted as overcomers will be the weaker ones, the ones who wept with tears, saying, “Lord, I cannot make it. Thank You for releasing all these high-peak truths unveiling to us what we should be. We should be in the Holy of Holies, living within the veil. We should be in oneness with You. You are our dwelling place, and we are Your dweller. I want to attain to this, but I cannot do anything. I am just a little one, a feeble one.” Such weaker ones who depend on the Lord will be counted worthy to be the overcomers.

There being two armies indicates that the country girl was not alone. An army indicates the principle of the Body. Both Tirzah and Jerusalem are buildings, not single pieces of stone. All these spiritual principles are here. We should humble ourselves and admit that we are nothing. Instead of worrying, we should change our feeling to praise. We can say, “Praise You, Lord. What a joy that I cannot do anything! What a joy that You do everything and have done everything for me!” Right away we will have plaited hair and strings of jewels around our neck, that is, submission and obedience to the Lord. We will no longer be stiff-necked.

In Revelation 3:8 the Lord said that those in Philadelphia had “a little power.” He admired their absoluteness and faithfulness to do what they could. If we are too able and too full of capacity in doing things, we are finished. Today the Lord is waiting. He is still calling for overcomers. If we say, “Lord, I can’t overcome,” the Lord will say, “My child, whatever you cannot do, I will do for you. I resist the proud, but I give grace to the humble.” This is the principle of two armies (Mahanaim) dancing. Remember that these two armies were composed of Jacob’s wives and children. Eventually, none of them fought against Esau. It was God who fought Esau by changing his attitude. Genesis 32 is a history of Mahanaim. Today we are the reality of God’s armies (Mahanaim).

BECOMING THE SHULAMMITE

Shulammite is the feminine form of *Solomon*, indicating that now the overcomers have become the same as Christ. All the overcomers must be one with God and must be Christ. The Shulammite was a country girl. Now, as a counterpart of Solomon, she has become the same as Solomon in life, in nature, in expression, and in function for the carrying out of God’s economy. In these four things—life, nature, expression, and function—we become the same as God and Christ but not in Their Godhead. To say that we are the same as God in His Godhead is a great blasphemy, but if we say that we cannot be the same as God in life, nature, expression, and function, this is unbelief. The Bible tells us again and again that God wants to be one with us and to make us one with Him. This is God’s intention.

The phrases *in Christ* and *in the Lord* are used repeatedly in the New Testament. Paul says that we should rejoice always in the Lord (Phil. 4:4). In ourselves we cannot rejoice. We can only sigh all the time. But in the Lord we are able to do all things (v. 13). Surely, our God is more qualified than Solomon. He is able to make us the same as He is in His life, in His nature, in His expression, and in His function to carry out His economy. This signifies that the overcomers were sinners. Now, in the maturity of Christ’s life, they have become the same as Christ in life, in nature, in expression, and in function for the accomplishment of God’s eternal economy.

In the last two chapters of the Bible, a city is presented to us. This city is the consummation of the entire Bible. In this city we can find all the types, figures, and prophecies in the Old Testament and all the realities in the New

Testament. This city is the aggregate of all the visions and revelations in God's Word. Throughout the centuries we have not seen the adequate interpretation of the record of this city. Gradually, the Lord has shown it to us. The primary thing is that the almighty King, the almighty "Solomon," wants to be one with His people, signified by a country girl. He does this not by coercing but by the personal and affectionate way of courting. Who could imagine that God wanted to contact His chosen people just like a man courting a lovely lady? This is how the Bible ends, with a couple in a marriage life—the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21). Hallelujah, we all are involved in this divine romance! We all are participating in this wonderful conclusion of the entire Holy Scriptures.

A CONCLUDING WORD

We need to remember that the romance in Song of Songs is in four stages. The first is the attracting and pursuing stage. The second is the stage of experiencing the cross, dealing with our "I," with our self. The third stage is to live in the heavenlies to be God's new creation in resurrection. The last stage is to live in the sanctuary with the veil dealt with all the time so that we may be one with the Triune God, who is our sanctuary, to have the top enjoyment in the Divine Trinity.

If we consider the progress of the seeker in Song of Songs, we might become discouraged, thinking that the final stages are too high for us to attain. We may think that the first stage is attainable. We can be attracted by Christ and pursue Him for satisfaction. But to experience the cross dealing with our self, the "I," for the purpose of living a life with Christ and to live in the ascension to be God's new creation in resurrection are experiences which may seem new to us. Even the terms are new. Eventually, we have to live in the sanctuary, which is God Himself. We need to live in the Triune God with the veil dealt with all the time so that we may have the top enjoyment of the very Triune God in whom we live as the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the tablets of the law.

In one session of fellowship that we had with Brother Watchman Nee before 1935, he told us that in all the stages of the spiritual life the principles are the same. At that time I was wondering what these principles were. For years I was following Brother Nee to find out the principles that govern all the stages of our spiritual life. Eventually, I discovered them. These governing

principles are Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, Christ's ascension, and our being heavenly, being divine (spiritual), and being a new creation.

Even at our regeneration, the first experience of the spiritual life, we can see all these principles. Regeneration is by the death of Christ to enter into His resurrection and ascension. This new birth makes us heavenly and divine to be God's new creation. This is the initial stage. The highest stage is to live in God as the sanctuary with the veil dealt with all the time. In this highest stage we can see the death of Christ applied to the veil of the flesh, to crucify the flesh. With the death of Christ there is also His resurrection and ascension. In this consummate stage we also see the heavenlies, God's divinity, and the new creation. The same principles that were in the initial stage of our spiritual life are also in the highest stage. Since the day we were regenerated, we had the things of the highest stage to live in God. When we were regenerated, Christ began to live in us, and we lived in Christ, in God. That living must be through the cross in resurrection and in ascension and is heavenly and divine for us to be a new creation.

It will help us to see this. Then we will never be disappointed. We can attain and obtain all the highest stages because all these stages, in principle, are ours already. In regeneration we are living in the Triune God, enjoying Him as our highest enjoyment. Right after regeneration, quite often we feel that we have to receive Christ's cross to cross our self out. Upon being regenerated there is a call within us to be crossed out, telling us that we should no longer live in our old life. Instead, we should live in the heavens and in the Triune God as our dwelling place to enjoy Him.

We should not think that we are far away from attaining and obtaining the highest stages of the spiritual life. All these stages are attainable and obtainable. We can reach them and obtain them because actually in principle they are ours already. Whether I have reached the last stage or not, I am not too sure. But I am sure of one thing—I am in it, and it is mine in principle.

Hallelujah for regeneration! Regeneration brings the gene of God into us (see 1 John 3:9). The gene includes everything of our entire life. All the experiences of our whole Christian life are in this gene. The gene will grow out all these things. Our eyes, nose, ears, and all the organs of our physical body were in a gene, even before we were born of our mother. After our birth all these organs grow. It is the same with our spiritual life. In principle, all the

spiritual high points are ours already because they are in the gene of God, which has been dispensed into us.