

**International Training for Elders
and Responsible Ones
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**PROPAGATING THE RESURRECTED,
ASCENDED, AND ALL-INCLUSIVE CHRIST
AS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

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Message One

Propagating the Resurrected Christ as the Firstborn Son according to the Promise Made to the Fathers

Scripture Reading: Acts 13:23, 32-34, 38-39; Rom. 1:3-4; 8:29

- I. “From this man’s seed, God, according to promise, brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus...And we announce to you the gospel of the promise made to the fathers”—Acts 13:23, 32:**
- A. The seed of David mentioned in 2 Samuel 7:12 is actually Christ as God’s firstborn Son (v. 14; Heb. 1:5-6), who has both divinity and humanity and is typified by Solomon.
 - B. The word concerning “your seed” in 2 Samuel 7:12 and “My son” in verse 14 implies that the seed of David would become the Son of God; that is, a human seed would become a divine Son:
 - 1. This corresponds with Paul’s word in Romans 1:3-4 concerning Christ as the seed of David being designated the Son of God in His humanity in resurrection.
 - 2. These verses clearly reveal that a seed of man, that is, a son of man, can become the Son of God:
 - a. God Himself, the divine One, became a human seed, the seed of a man, David.
 - b. This seed was Jesus, the God-man, who was the Son of God by virtue of His divinity alone—Luke 1:35.
 - c. Through His resurrection He as the human seed became the Son of God in His humanity as well.
- II. “God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; this day have I begotten You’ ”—Acts 13:33:**
- A. In verses 32 and 33 we see that Christ as the Firstborn of God was promised to the fathers, and God fulfilled this promise by raising up Jesus.
 - B. Resurrection was a birth to the man Jesus:
 - 1. He was begotten by God in His resurrection to be the firstborn Son of God among many brothers—Rom. 8:29.
 - 2. He was the only begotten Son from eternity—John 1:18; 3:16.
 - 3. After His incarnation, through resurrection He was begotten by God in His humanity to be God’s firstborn Son—Heb. 1:6.
 - C. Paul was able to see the Lord’s resurrection in Psalm 2:7: “You are My Son; / Today I have begotten You”:
 - 1. Paul applied the word today to the day of the Lord’s resurrection.
 - 2. This means that Christ’s resurrection was His birth as the firstborn Son of God.
 - 3. Jesus, the Son of Man, was born to be the Son of God through being raised up from the

dead; therefore, God's raising up Jesus from the dead was His begetting of Him to be His firstborn Son—Acts 13:33.

D. Through incarnation God's only begotten Son put on humanity and became the God-man (John 1:14, 18; Luke 1:35); then in resurrection this God-man was born of God to be His Firstborn (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:6; Rom. 8:29):

1. Before incarnation God's only begotten Son did not have the human nature; He had only the divine nature.

2. In resurrection God's firstborn Son has the human nature as well as the divine nature.

E. Through His resurrection Christ was born to be the firstborn Son, and at the same time all His believers were born to be the many sons of God—1 Pet. 1:3; Heb. 2:10:

1. Among these many sons, only the Firstborn is God's only begotten Son—John 1:18; 1 John 4:9.

2. This only begotten Son of God, in His resurrected humanity, is also the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:29.

3. The Firstborn has both divinity and humanity, and we, His believers as God's many sons, also possess both the human nature and the divine nature—2 Pet. 1:4.

F. In Acts 13 Paul was not preaching Christ as the only begotten Son, as the Gospel of John does (1:18; 3:16); rather, in Acts 13 Paul was preaching Christ as the firstborn Son of God, for propagation:

1. As the only begotten Son, the Lord is the embodiment of the divine life; the Gospel of John emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that, as the Son of God, He is the embodiment of the divine life—1:4.

2. Through resurrection Christ became the firstborn Son of God as the life-dispenser for the propagation of life—Rom. 8:29.

3. First, Christ was the only begotten Son as the embodiment of life; now He is also the firstborn Son for the propagation of life.

4. Through His becoming the firstborn Son of God in resurrection, the divine life has been dispensed into all His believers to bring forth the propagation of the life that is embodied in Him.

III. “As to His having raised Him up from the dead,...He spoke in this way, ‘I will give you the holy things of David, the faithful things’ ”—Acts 13:34:

A. The resurrected Christ is the holy and faithful things of David; the holy things of David, the faithful things refers to the resurrected Christ—vv. 33-34.

B. The phrase the holy things of David, the faithful things indicates that Christ was of David, for it was out of David's seed that God raised up such a One—Rom. 1:3-4.

C. The phrase the holy things of David, the faithful things is actually a divine title, a title of Christ.

D. These holy and faithful things are all the aspects of what Christ is, such as life, light, grace, righteousness, holiness, the bread of life, the living water, power, wisdom, glory, the depths of God, the Head, the Body, the firstfruits, and the second man.

E. All the holy and faithful things are Christ Himself as mercies to us—Isa. 55:3; 2 Chron. 6:42; Psa. 89:1.

F. We need to see that the resurrected Christ is all the holy and faithful things given to us by God as an all-inclusive gift; this was the Christ preached by Paul in Acts 13.

IV. “Through this One forgiveness of sins is announced to you,” and “in this One everyone who believes is justified”—vv. 38-39:

- A. To be forgiven of sins is on the negative side and is for our release from condemnation—v. 38.
- B. To be justified is on the positive side and is for our reconciliation to God and our being accepted by Him—v. 39; Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:24-25.
- C. In Acts 13:38 and 39 Paul twice spoke of “this One”:
 - 1. This is the One who has been resurrected to be God’s firstborn Son, our Savior, and the many holy and faithful things.
 - 2. Through the One who is the firstborn Son, the Savior, and the holy and faithful things, forgiveness of sins has been announced to us, and through this One we are justified.
 - 3. The One by whom we are forgiven and justified is Himself our forgiveness and justification:
 - a. Both forgiveness and justification are mercies from God to us, and these mercies are aspects of the resurrected Christ—vv. 33-34, 38-39.
 - b. Christ in His resurrection is our forgiveness and justification.

Message Two

The Continuation of the Book of Acts— Living in the Divine History within Human History

Scripture Reading: Acts 28:31; John 5:17; Acts 1:14; 6:7; 11:23-24; 19:20; 26:18

- I. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history as the acting God; they have become God in life, in nature, in expression, and in function (but not in the Godhead) for the spreading and building up of the church as the corporate manifestation of Christ—1:8, 14; 2:14a; 4:10-20, 31-32; 5:20, 38-39; 13:1-4; 26:16-19; 28:31:**
- A. In Peter's first proclamation of the gospel in the book of Acts, he quoted from the book of Joel, which reveals the intrinsic, divine history within the outward, human history—Acts 2:17-21; Joel 1:1-4; 2:28-32.
 - B. The divine history within the human history is Christ's "goings forth...from the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2) across the bridge of time into eternity future (Psa. 90:2) so that He might be dispensed into His chosen ones as the Desire of all the nations (Hag. 2:7) for His corporate manifestation and His full glorification.
 - C. Joel speaks concerning the outpouring of the processed, consummated, compound Spirit, who was poured out on the day of Pentecost; this Spirit is the consummated Triune God and the realization of Christ for the manifestation of Christ—2:28-29; Acts 2:1-4, 16-21; 1 Tim. 3:15-16.
- II. The Acts of the Apostles is a book without an ending because this book is still being continued as the divine history within human history—28:31:**
- A. The Lord said, "My Father is working until now, and I also am working" (John 5:17); this shows that since the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man, God has been working until now, and the Lord is also working.
 - B. The book of Acts is a record of the work of God; after Acts 28 many of God's vessels are still carrying on with His work; His work is continuing and has not stopped.
 - C. His work will go on until the kingdom and even until the new heaven and new earth; God is always advancing; He never stops; if we know this and believe in this, we will praise the Lord; even as the New Jerusalem, His slaves will serve Him as priests—Rev. 22:3; cf. Acts 13:36a.
 - D. The work of the Holy Spirit in preaching Christ for His propagation, multiplication, and spread through the believers of Christ was not yet completed and needed to be continued for a long period of time.
 - E. Such an evangelistic work for Christ's increase, propagation, multiplication, and spread is according to God's New Testament economy for the producing of many sons for God (Rom. 8:29) that they might be the members of Christ to constitute His Body (12:5) for the carrying out of God's eternal plan and the fulfillment of His eternal will; this is revealed in detail in the twenty-one Epistles and the book of Revelation, which follow the book of Acts.
 - F. Since God is after a corporate, shining vessel, a vessel of testimony, His children must be brought to the awareness of the Body of Christ and learn to live the Body life; otherwise,

they are useless in His hand and can never fulfill His goal—Rom. 12:1-5; 1 Cor. 12:12; Rev. 1:10-12.

- G. Even the testimony of the overcomers is maintained on behalf of the whole church; they do the work, and the whole church receives the benefit—12:5-9; 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:3, 5, 12, 20-21.
- H. The overcomers are not for themselves; they stand on the ground of the church, and they are there to bring the whole church to perfection; even the victories of the overcomers are corporate victories—cf. Phil. 1:19.

III. The word of God is still growing and being multiplied as the continuation of the book of Acts—6:7; 12:24; 19:20:

- A. Grew in Acts 6:7 refers to the growth in life, indicating that the word of God is a matter of life that grows as a seed sown into man's heart for the increase of Christ, the growth of God, within us—Mark 4:14; Col. 2:19.
- B. Multiplied in Acts 12:24 refers to the increase of Christ in numbers; actually, the multiplication of the disciples depends on the growth of the word.
- C. New disciples are “added to the Lord” to become the parts of Christ, the members of Christ—5:14; 11:24; Rom. 15:16.
- D. We need to encourage the new believers “to remain with the Lord with purpose of heart”; this is to be persistently faithful to the Lord, cleave to Him, and live in close fellowship with Him—Acts 11:23.

IV. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history by calling on the name of the Lord, suffering on behalf of the name of the Lord, and speaking in the name of the Lord, the name of Jesus:

- A. Joel's prophecy and its fulfillment concerning God's New Testament jubilee have two aspects: on God's side, He poured out His Spirit in the ascension of the resurrected Christ; on our side, we call on the name of the ascended Lord, who has accomplished all, attained unto all, and obtained all—Acts 2:16-18, 21; Joel 2:28-29, 32a:
 - 1. Our divine history in the midst of human history is a history of calling on the name of the Lord to enjoy the riches of Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ as the fullness of Christ—Rom. 10:12-13; Eph. 3:8, 19; 1:22-23.
 - 2. By calling on the name of the Lord, we keep ourselves in God's golden, divine history—a history that begins with Enosh (Gen. 4:26), continues through the Old and New Testaments (Job 12:4; Gen. 12:8; 26:25; Deut. 4:7; Judg. 15:18; 1 Sam. 12:18; Psa. 116:4, 13, 17; 80:18; 88:9; 1 Kings 18:24; Isa. 12:4; Lam. 3:55, 57; Psa. 99:6; Isa. 55:6; Jonah 1:6; 2 Kings 5:11; Isa. 41:25; Acts 2:21; 7:59; 9:14, 21; 22:16; Rom. 10:12-13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:22), and concludes with the last prayer in the Bible (Rev. 22:20).
- B. As we are living in the divine history, we suffer on behalf of the Lord's name within the human history; it is a real honor to be dishonored on behalf of the Name, the very name of the man-dishonored but God-honored Jesus—Acts 4:18-20, 29-31; 5:41-42; 9:13-16; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Col. 1:24-25.
- C. We carry out the divine history within human history by speaking “boldly in the name of Jesus”; this name is the expression of the sum total of what the Lord is in His person and work—Acts 9:27; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Thes. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:5.

V. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history by living, moving, and acting as one Body; they do everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body:

- A. After the Lord Jesus died, resurrected, and ascended, He continued to live, act, walk, and work on earth in thousands of people because He imparted Himself into them through His death and resurrection—John 12:24.
- B. The four Gospels give us a picture of the Head, and the book of Acts shows us the Body; the book of Acts is actually the acts of Christ by the Spirit in the church as His Body, His reproduction and duplication—1:14; 2:14a, 42; 9:4-5; 28:13-15.

VI. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history by rejecting themselves and living by another life—Christ as the divine life; this corporate living of Christ is the reality of the Body of Christ:

- A. The life that is indicated by this life in Acts 5:20 is the divine life preached, ministered, and lived by Peter that overcame the Jewish leaders' persecution, threatening, and imprisonment; Peter's life and work made the divine life so real and present in his situation that even the angel saw it and pointed it out.
- B. Paul lived Christ and served God by the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus in his spirit (the divine Spirit mingled with his human spirit as one spirit); he lived within the veil (in his spirit as the practical Holy of Holies) and outside the camp (the human organization of religion)—16:6-7; 17:16; 19:21; Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 1:9; Phil. 3:3; Heb. 6:19-20; 13:13.
- C. In order to live in the divine history within human history and by the divine life in our human life, we need to be vessels open to the Lord, loving Him, receiving Him, being filled with Him, and letting Him be everything to us and do everything in us, through us, and for us—Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 9:21, 23; cf. 2 Kings 4:1-6.

VII. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history by continuing steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word; this is to live in the apostolic ministry in coordination with Christ as our great High Priest in His heavenly ministry—6:4; Heb. 7:25; 8:1-2:

- A. By prayer we set our mind on the things above and become a reflection of Christ's ministry in the heavens; we depend on prayer to do what man cannot do, to understand what man cannot understand, and to speak what man cannot speak—Acts 9:11; 13:1-4; Col. 3:1-3; 4:2; Eph. 6:18; Dan. 6:10; 9:2-3; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Cor. 3:6.
- B. By the ministry of the word, we impart Christ into others as the heavenly life and power so that they may be sustained with the riches of Christ to live Christ as their heavenly life on earth—Rom. 15:16; cf. Isa. 50:4-5.

VIII. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history seen in Psalm 68, which shows that Christ is the center of God's move on the earth and the reality of God's activities through the church—vv. 1, 24:

- A. We need to enjoy the processed and consummated Triune God as the life-dispensing and outpoured Spirit day by day—vv. 11-13; Acts 2:46-47; 5:42; 16:5; 20:31; 28:30-31.
- B. We need to dwell in Christ as the “shore” of the evangelists for the transportation and spreading

in the preaching of the gospel; on the day of Pentecost at least one hundred twenty gospel “ships,” all of whom were Galileans, set out from the shore to spread the gospel—Psa. 68:27; Gen. 49:13; Acts 2:7; 13:31.

Message Three

Being Witnesses of the Resurrected, Ascended, and All-inclusive Christ

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8; 2:32-36; 3:14-15; 4:33; 5:30-32; 7:56; 20:28; 26:16; 16:31

I. In the book of Acts the apostles and the disciples were witnesses of Christ—1:8; 4:33:

- A. According to the revelation in the book of Acts, everyone who is raised up and sent out by the Lord is a witness of the Lord—1:8; 26:16.
- B. In the New Testament the meaning of witness is primarily to bear a living testimony of Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension—1:22; 2:32; 5:32; 10:39-40; 17:3, 18; 23:11; 24:14-15.
- C. Testifying requires experiences of seeing and enjoyment concerning the Lord or spiritual things; it is different from merely teaching—2:42.
- D. The Lord appointed Paul as a minister and a witness—26:16:
 - 1. A minister is for the ministry; a witness, for a testimony.
 - 2. The ministry is related mainly to the work, to what a minister does; a testimony is related to the person, to what a person is.
 - 3. Paul was a witness of the things in which he had seen the Lord and of the things in which the Lord would appear to him—v. 16.
- E. In His ascension the Lord carries out His ministry in the heavens through witnesses, who testify of Him in His resurrection life and with His ascension power and authority—1:8; 2:32-36; 40; 4:33.

II. The Christ revealed in Acts is in resurrection—1:3; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33:

- A. Through death Christ entered into another realm, the realm of resurrection:
 - 1. Because Christ is the living One with an indestructible life, death is not able to hold Him—Heb. 7:16; Acts 2:24.
 - 2. He delivered Himself to death, but death had no way to retain Him; rather, death was defeated by Him, and He rose up from it.
- B. We need to know Christ in the power, sphere, and element of His resurrection—Phil. 3:10-11.
- C. Christ's resurrection was the focus of the apostles' testimony—Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:13, 15, 26; 4:33; 10:39-40; 13:33; 17:3, 18:
 - 1. God glorified His Servant Jesus through His resurrection and in His ascension—Luke 24:26; Acts 3:13, 15, 26; 4:10, 33; 5:30-31.
 - 2. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus points back to His incarnation, humanity, human living, and God-ordained death and points forward to His ascension, ministry and administration in heaven, and coming back—2:23; 1:9-11.

III. The Christ revealed in Acts is in ascension—vv. 9-11; 2:32; 5:31:

- A. Whereas resurrection is a matter of life, Christ's ascension is a matter of position, and position is a matter of authority.
- B. The Lord's ascension was His initiation into His living and ministry in the heavens; this initiation brought Him into a new realm, that is, into the heavens where He now has His living and is ministering there.
- C. The Lord's ascension brought Him into a new stage—the stage of a resurrected man living in the heavens as the center of God's administration—Rev. 5:6:
 - 1. This resurrected One is now sitting in the heavens to execute God's administration—Heb. 12:2.
 - 2. The resurrected Christ ascended to the heavens to be exalted by God and to be given the kingship, the lordship, and the headship over all things—Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:22.
 - 3. The ascended Christ has also obtained the throne, the glory, and all the authority in the universe—Rev. 5:6; Heb. 1:3; 2:9; Matt. 28:18.
- D. The ascended Christ is the Lord of all to possess all—Acts 2:36:
 - 1. The lordship of Christ is one of the most important aspects of what He has obtained in His ascension—10:36.
 - 2. Since the lordship of Christ was fully established in His ascension, we—the members of His Body—need to realize this heavenly fact—Eph. 1:20-21.
- E. The ascended Christ is God's Anointed to carry out God's commission to work out the spreading of the gospel and the building up of the church—Acts 1:8.

IV. The Christ revealed in Acts is the all-inclusive Christ—3:14-15, 25-26; 5:30-32; 7:56; 10:36, 39-43; 16:31; 17:30-31; 20:28:

- A. Christ is the Author of life—3:14-15:
 - 1. As indicated by the Greek word rendered "Author," Christ is the origin or Originator of life; He is the Author, the Chief Leader, of life—v. 15.
 - 2. In Acts 3 we see the imparting of life into others, which is to propagate Christ; for such a propagation, we need the Lord as the Author of life, the source of life.
 - 3. As the Author of life, Christ is the holy and righteous One—v. 14.
- B. Christ is God's Servant—vv. 25-26:
 - 1. God glorified His Servant Jesus through His resurrection and ascension—v. 13.
 - 2. As the seed of Abraham and the Servant of God, Christ is the One in whom all the families of the earth—all the races, colors, and nationalities—will be blessed—vv. 25-26.
 - 3. God sent back the ascended Christ as a blessing by pouring out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; hence, the Spirit whom God poured out was the Christ whom God raised and exalted to the heavens—2:33; 3:13-15, 25-26.
- C. Christ is the Leader and Savior—5:30-32:
 - 1. God exalted the man Jesus as the highest Leader, the Prince, the Ruler of the kings to rule over the world, and the Savior to save God's chosen people—Rev. 1:5; 19:16; Acts 5:31.
 - 2. Leader is related to His authority, and Savior is related to His salvation; He rules sovereignly over the earth with His authority that the environment might be fit for God's

chosen people to receive His salvation—cf. 17:26-27.

D. Christ is the Son of Man—7:56:

1. Acts 7:56 reveals that Christ is the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God to be the comfort, encouragement, and strength to the one martyred for Him.
2. Stephen saw the ascended Christ as the Son of Man; this indicates that the Christ who is in the heavens still has His humanity; He still possesses His human nature.

E. Christ is God—20:28:

1. Christ as our God is the Purchaser of the church, having obtained the church with His own blood—v. 28.
2. God secured, purchased, and redeemed the church with “His own blood” (v. 28), “the blood of Jesus His Son”—1 John 1:7.
3. Christ died on the cross as the God-man, and the blood that He shed there for our redemption was not only the blood of the man Jesus but also the blood of the God-man.
4. The blood through which God obtained the church is God’s own blood.

F. Christ is the Lord of all—Acts 10:36:

1. All in Acts 10:36 refers to all peoples—1 Tim. 2:4.
2. The ascended Christ is the Lord of all the different races and peoples on earth; with Him, there is no respect of persons—Rev. 5:9.

G. Christ is the Judge—Acts 10:39-43:

1. Christ has been designated by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead—v. 42.
2. Christ is a man to judge the world, designated by God in righteousness and proved by God’s raising Him from the dead—17:30-31.

H. Christ is the Lord Jesus, the object of the believers’ faith—16:31:

1. To believe in the gospel is mainly to believe in Jesus Christ—v. 31.
2. To believe in the Lord Jesus is to stand on the person of Christ and all that He has accomplished, both of which constitute the belief, the faith, of God’s New Testament economy—1 Tim. 1:4.

Message Four

Shepherding the Flock of God according to God by Being Patterns of the Flock

Scripture Reading: Acts 20:18-38

I. To shepherd the flock of God according to God is to shepherd the flock of God according to God's desire—1 Pet. 5:1-4:

A. We must see that the heart's desire, the good pleasure, of God in His economy is to be the fountain, the source, of living waters to dispense Himself into His chosen people for their satisfaction and enjoyment; the goal of this enjoyment is to produce the church, God's counterpart, as God's increase, God's enlargement, to be God's fullness for His expression—Jer. 2:13; John 3:29-30; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:16-19, 21:

1. Instead of drinking Him to become His increase for His expression, we can become like Israel by forsaking God as the fountain of living waters to hew out cisterns (typifying idols) to replace God as our enjoyment—Jer. 2:13.
2. An idol is anything within us that we love more than the Lord or that replaces the Lord in our life; whatever we possess, and even whatever we are, can become an idol—Ezek. 14:3; 1 John 5:21.
3. Our peace, safety, health, and possessions may become idols to us, but God is faithful in His purpose to take these things away so that we might drink of Him as the fountain of living waters; God is faithful in leading us into His economy, and His economy is for us to enjoy Christ, to absorb Christ, to drink Christ, to eat Christ, and to assimilate Christ so that God may increase in us for His expression—1 Cor. 1:9; 5:7-8; 12:12-13; Jer. 2:13.

B. We must be brought back to the realization that we need Christ as our enjoyment; we also have to help others to know how to enjoy Christ, and we have to bring the distracted believers back to the simplicity of the genuine appreciation, love, and enjoyment of the precious person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as their life and everything—2 Cor. 11:2-3; 1:24; Rev. 2:4, 7:

1. To enjoy Christ as our life supply should be the primary matter in the church life; the content of the church life depends upon the enjoyment of Christ; the more we enjoy Him, the richer the content will be.
2. First Corinthians is a book on the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ; the enjoyment of the crucified and resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit solves all the problems in the church—1:2, 9, 24, 30; 2:2; 5:7-8.

II. We must shepherd the flock of God by being patterns of the flock; the apostle Paul, as a pattern to all the believers, the members of the Body of Christ, lived Christ for His magnification as His continuation—1 Pet. 5:3; Phil. 1:19-21a; Acts 9:4-5, 15; 26:19; 1 Tim. 1:16:

A. Paul was a disciple of Christ—seeing Christ, hearing Christ, and learning Christ as the reality is in Jesus—Acts 9:1-19, 25-27; 22:14-15; Eph. 4:20-21.

B. Paul was a chosen vessel of Christ to contain Him, be filled with Him, and overflow with Him

- for His fullness—Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:7; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19.
- C. Paul was a man of prayer—Acts 9:11; 13:1-3; 14:23; 16:13, 25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2.
- D. Paul depended on the Body, doing everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body—Acts 9:11-12, 17-18, 25-27; 1 Cor. 1:1; 12:14-27.
- E. Paul practiced calling on the name of the Lord—Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; 2 Tim. 2:22; Rom. 10:12-13; Phil. 2:9-11.
- F. Paul lived by the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus (the Spirit of a man with abundant strength for suffering) for his preaching ministry, a ministry of suffering carried out among human beings and for human beings in the human life for the building up of the Body of Christ—John 7:37-39; Acts 9:16; 16:7, 22-34; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Heb. 6:19-20; 13:13.
- G. Paul lived in his mingled spirit (the divine Spirit mingled with his human spirit as one spirit)—Acts 17:16; 19:21; Rom. 8:4, 6, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- H. Paul was filled with the Spirit of joy, essentially for his existence, and with the Spirit of power, economically for his function—Acts 13:9, 52; Eph. 5:18.
- I. Paul exercised himself to always have a good and pure conscience—Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9.
- J. Paul lived a life of always rejoicing in the Lord, praying unceasingly, and thanking Him in everything—Acts 16:25; 27:35; Phil. 4:4; Col. 3:16; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.
- K. Paul was allied with God and assisted by God to speak the gospel boldly in the name of Jesus to spread the testimony of Jesus unto the uttermost part of the earth—Acts 9:20, 27; 26:22-29; 28:31; 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:2; cf. Rom. 15:24, 28.
- L. Paul cherished the saints in the humanity of Jesus and nourished them in the divinity of Christ with all the truths of God's eternal economy, displaying in his living the word of the Lord Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive—Acts 20:18-38; 1 Thes. 2:1-12.
- M. Paul was a pattern to the elders in Ephesus, a pattern of what the elders should be to the church—Acts 20:27-38:
1. He served the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials—v. 19.
 2. He shepherded the saints by teaching them publicly and from house to house, declaring to them all the counsel of God, all of God's eternal economy—vv. 20, 26-27.
 3. He was burdened for the elders to see the precious love of God for the church and the preciousness, the exceeding worth, of the church in the eyes of God so that they would treasure the church as God did; he admonished the elders to “take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood”—v. 28.
 4. He warned the elders concerning the destroyers of the divine building—those who are wolves, not sparing the flock, and those who speak perverted things to draw away the disciples after them—vv. 29-30.
 5. He contacted each one of the saints, telling the elders to remember that “for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears”—v. 31.
 6. Because Paul saw that the unique goal of God's calling is the building up of the Body of Christ and that Christ builds up the Body by the Body, he was a pattern to the elders in Ephesus of functioning to perfect all the saints “unto the work of the ministry, unto the

building up of the Body of Christ,” so that all the saints would grow in life and would function in life according to their measure of life to be a supply of life to cause “the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love”—Eph. 4:11-16.

- N. Paul’s fourth ministry journey (Acts 27—28) shows in a particular way his life of living Christ, magnifying Christ, doing all things in Christ, and pursuing Christ in order to be found in Christ—Phil. 1:19-21a; 3:8-9, 14; 4:13:
1. All during the apostle’s long and unfortunate imprisonment-voyage, the Lord kept the apostle in His ascendancy and enabled him to live a life far beyond the realm of anxiety; this life was fully dignified, with the highest standard of human virtues expressing the most excellent divine attributes—vv. 5-9.
 2. This was Jesus living again on the earth in His divinely enriched humanity! This was the wonderful, excellent, and mysterious God-man, who lived in the Gospels, continuing to live in the Acts through one of His many members! This was a living witness of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and God-exalted Christ!
 3. In Paul’s living and ministry he expressed the very true God, who in Jesus Christ had gone through the processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, and who, as the all-inclusive Spirit, was then living in him and through him—Gal. 1:15-16, 24; 2:20; 3:14; cf. Acts 28:6.
 4. On the sea in the storm, the Lord had made the apostle not only the owner of his fellow voyagers (27:24) but also their life-guarantor and comforter (vv. 22, 25); now, on the land in peace, the Lord made him furthermore not only a magical attraction in the eyes of the superstitious people (28:1-6) but also a healer and a joy to them (vv. 7-10).
 5. The warm welcome that Paul received from the brothers in Rome and the loving care of those in Puteoli (vv. 13-15) show the beautiful Body life that existed in the early days among the churches and apostles:
 - a. Apparently, the apostle, as a prisoner in bonds, had entered the region of the dark capital of the Satan-usurped empire; actually, as the ambassador of Christ with His authority (Eph. 6:20; Matt. 28:18-19), he had come into another part of the participation in the Body life of Christ’s church in the kingdom of God on earth.
 - b. While he was suffering the persecution of religion in the empire of Satan (the satanic chaos in the old creation), he was enjoying the church life in the kingdom of God (the divine economy for the new creation); this was a comfort and an encouragement to him.
- O. The ultimate issue of the church will be the New Jerusalem in eternity future as God’s full and eternal expression; this should be the reality and goal of all our gospel preaching today as we follow the pattern of the apostle Paul—“proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered”—Acts 28:31.

Message Five

Christ as the Stone-Savior Producing Living Stones for God's Building

Scripture Reading: Acts 4:10-12; Psa. 118:22, 24; 1 Pet. 2:4-8

I. In Acts 4:10-12 we see that as the cornerstone Christ was despised and crucified by the Jewish leaders, the builders, but raised from the dead by God, becoming the cornerstone of God's building with God's salvation being uniquely in Him.

II. Psalm 118 speaks of Christ as the cornerstone for God's building:

A. "The stone which the builders rejected / Has become the head of the corner"—v. 22:

1. The Lord Jesus quoted this verse in Matthew 21:42, where He was indicating that He is the stone for God's building.
2. Christ is the cornerstone for the building up of the church in the New Testament age—16:18.
3. From the Lord's word in Matthew 21:42, Peter came to know the Lord as the precious stone held in honor by God—1 Pet. 2:4, 6.

B. On the day of His resurrection the Lord Jesus was made the cornerstone by God—Psa. 118:24:

1. Christ was chosen by God in eternity past to be the cornerstone for God's spiritual building—1 Pet. 1:20; 2:4.
2. The Jewish leaders as the builders rejected Him to the uttermost, to such an extent that they put Him on the cross—Matt. 21:38-42.
3. God chose Christ as the cornerstone a second time in Christ's resurrection, thereby confirming His initial choosing of Christ in eternity past—Acts 4:10-11.
4. After God resurrected Christ, He uplifted Him to the heavens—Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9:
 - a. Christ's ascension to Zion in the heavens is a further confirmation that God had chosen Him to be the cornerstone—Rev. 14:1; Isa. 28:16; 1 Pet. 2:6.
 - b. Both Christ's resurrection and His ascension prove and confirm that He is the One whom God has chosen to be the head of the corner for God's building—Psa. 118:22; Acts 4:11.

C. As the all-inclusive stone, Christ is the centrality of God's move for the building up of His eternal habitation—Matt. 21:42, 44; Zech. 3:9; Eph. 2:19-22:

1. Everything Christ is, everything He has done, and everything He is doing are due to the fact that He is the cornerstone.
2. It is by His being the cornerstone that He could die for us, that we could be crucified with Him, made alive with Him, resurrected with Him, and seated with Him in the heavenlies, and that He could save us, transform us into precious stones, and build us together to be God's habitation, God's unique temple in the universe—Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:5-6, 20-22.

III. In Acts 4:10-12 Peter proclaimed Christ as the Stone-Savior:

- A. Peter's quoting Psalm 118 indicates that he preached Christ not only as the Savior for the salvation of sinners but also as the stone for God's building—Acts 4:11-12:
 - 1. It is such a Christ who is the unique salvation to sinners.
 - 2. It is in His unique name under heaven, a name despised and rejected by the Jewish leaders but honored by God, that sinners must be saved not only from sin but also to participate in God's building—v. 12; Phil. 2:9-10; Matt. 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:5.
- B. Christ is not only the holy One, the righteous One, the Author of life, and the Servant; He is also the stone for God's building:
 - 1. This stone is the unique One in whom we can be saved—Acts 4:11-12.
 - 2. Christ is the Stone-Savior; as the Stone-Savior, He is solid, strong, and reliable.
 - 3. We can be saved only in the name of Jesus, and Jesus is the stone; this means that we have a Stone-Savior.
- C. In Christ God came in incarnation to be a stone for the building of God's universal habitation—John 1:1, 14; Matt. 21:42:
 - 1. At first, Christ was a common stone, and the Jewish leaders rejected Him by killing Him.
 - 2. God honored Him by raising Him from the dead and making Him a cornerstone, the prominent stone, that joins the walls of a building.
 - 3. As the cornerstone of God's habitation, Christ joins the wall of the Jewish believers and the wall of the Gentile believers—Eph. 2:22.

IV. Christ as the Stone-Savior is producing living stones for God's building, God's spiritual house—1 Pet. 2:4-8:

- A. For us as believers, the resurrected Christ is the propagating stone and the building stone—vv. 4-5:
 - 1. First, we became His propagation, and now He is building us up together into God's dwelling place—v. 5.
 - 2. As the Stone-Savior in God's economy, Christ is both the Builder and the material for God's building—Matt. 16:18; 1 Pet. 2:4-5.
- B. Through the Lord's speaking in John 1:42 and Matthew 16:18, Peter received the revelation that both Christ and the believers are living stones for God's building and eventually realized that God's goal is to have a spiritual house built up with living stones—1 Pet. 2:4-8:
 - 1. First Peter 2:4 speaks of Christ as a living stone:
 - a. A living stone is one that not only possesses life but also grows in life; this is Christ for God's building.
 - b. As life to us, Christ is the seed; for God's building, He is the stone.
 - c. After receiving Him as the seed of life, we need to grow so that we may experience Him as the stone living in us—1:23; 2:2, 4.
 - d. In this way He makes us living stones, transformed with His divine nature, so that we may be built up together with others as a spiritual house upon Him as both the foundation and the cornerstone—1 Cor. 3:10; Eph. 2:20.
 - 2. In Christ and through Christ we, as believers, become living stones to be built up as a

spiritual house—1 Pet. 2:5:

- a. We are living stones through regeneration and transformation—John 3:6; 2 Cor. 3:18.
 - b. We were created of clay (Rom. 9:21), but at regeneration we received the seed of life, which by its growth in us transforms us into living stones—1 Pet. 2:2, 5.
3. The spiritual house into which we are being built up is God's building—Eph. 2:21-22:
- a. Eventually, this building will consummate in the New Jerusalem, the stone city—Rev. 21:2.
 - b. We are becoming the precious stones that will be built up into the New Jerusalem.
 - c. This process takes place as we daily contact Christ, the living stone for God's building, and are transformed—1 Pet. 2:4-5; Rom. 12:2.

Message Six

Keeping Ourselves in the One Flow of the Lord's Work for the Spreading of the Church, and Receiving the Lord's Mercy to Be Saved from Satan's Schemes

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8; 5:20; 6:4, 7; 9:31; 12:24; 19:20

- I. The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this day, is just one stream for God's goal to build up the church for His corporate expression—Matt. 16:18; cf. Ezek. 47:1-12:**
- A. When we give the Lord the preeminence in our entire being, making Him our first love, He becomes the divine stream to us, flowing within us and out of us as the first works; the first works are works that are motivated by, issue from, and express the Lord as our first love—John 4:14b; Rev. 22:1; 2:4-5.
 - B. Only works that are motivated by the first love are gold, silver, and precious stones—1 Cor. 2:9; 3:12.
- II. The basic principle of the church is that it is eternal and universal, so the church must constantly spread on the earth; the growth of the church and the building up of the church are based on spreading—Acts 1:8; 8:1; 9:31:**
- A. The spreading of the church is brought about by the growth in the Lord's life and the flowing out of the Lord's life, the overflow of life—Eph. 4:16; John 7:37-39; Acts 2:42, 46-47; 5:20; 6:4, 7; 12:24; 19:20.
 - B. When the church begins to spread, erroneous concepts are shattered, regardless of whether the concepts are regional, racial, or mutually discriminatory; it is through spreading that all our close-mindedness is eliminated—cf. 1 Cor. 12:24; Col. 3:10-11.
 - C. Acts 8 shows that the first step in the church's spread was to Samaria (vv. 1-25), and the second step was to Ethiopia, to Africa (vv. 26-39); this shows that we must preach the gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation, because the church is universal and needs to spread (Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9).
 - D. Acts 9 shows God's choosing of Saul (later Paul), which is against the human concept; our narrow, erroneous human concept needs to be broken and shattered through the spreading of the church; we must believe that a person can be persecuting the church one hour and preaching the gospel the next hour—vv. 10-22.
 - E. Acts 10 indicates that the Lord's evangelistic move on earth is under His administration on the throne in heaven and that the gospel needs to be spread to the four corners of the inhabited earth to collect all kinds of unclean (sinful) people, cleansing them with the redeeming blood of Christ and washing them with the renewing Holy Spirit—vv. 11-12, 15, 28; cf. Heb. 8:1; Acts 7:56.
 - F. Acts 13 reveals that in the church in Antioch, the five prophets and teachers who were ministering to the Lord were composed of Jews and Gentiles, each having a different

background, education, and status; this indicates that the church is composed of all races and classes of people regardless of their background and that the spiritual gifts and functions given to the members of the Body are not based on their natural status—v. 1; 4:36; Rom. 16:21; Luke 9:7-9; Acts 22:3:

1. Through these five faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ, the Lord took a great step to set apart Barnabas and Saul for His work and move to spread the gospel of the kingdom to the Gentile world.
2. It was absolutely a move by the Spirit, in the Spirit, and with the Spirit through the coordination of the faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ on earth with the Head in the heavens—13:1-4.

G. On the apostle Paul's first trip to spread the gospel, he went to Cyprus and then to Asia Minor to establish many local churches—v. 1—14:28; Rev. 1:4.

H. After Paul separated from Barnabas, he went out on his second ministry journey to Europe (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and returning through Ephesus back to Antioch)—Acts 15:35-40; 16:6—18:22.

I. Paul's third journey was from Antioch to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, and Greece to Jerusalem—v. 23—21:17.

J. Paul's fourth journey was from Caesarea to Rome—27:1—28:31.

III. We must receive the Lord's mercy to be saved from Satan's schemes to frustrate the spreading and building up of the church, keeping ourselves in the flow of the age for the building up of His Body—cf. Heb. 4:16; Lam. 3:22-25:

A. We must be saved from outward and dead ordinances, human opinions, and the self with its old concepts; whoever receives mercy from the Lord will be saved in these matters; the degree to which we are saved is the degree to which the church can be built up—Rom. 5:10; Phil. 1:19-21a; 2:12-16; Acts 15:1-12; Gal. 2:21; 5:1; 2:4.

B. We must learn from the lesson of Peter to be saved from the veils of our religious traditions and old background so that we may see and live under the vision of God's eternal economy to hold the truth of the gospel—Acts 10:9-16; Gal. 2:11-14.

C. We must learn from the lesson of Barnabas to be saved from human opinions and natural relationships—disputes that arise among the co-workers because of personal relationships are terrible; remember this well—Acts 13:13; 15:35-40; Col. 4:10.

D. We must learn from the lesson of Apollos to be saved from a ministry that lacks a complete revelation of God's New Testament economy and from not being fully one with the ministry of the age—Acts 18:24—19:2; 1 Cor. 1:12; 16:10-12.

E. We must learn from the lesson of Paul in Acts 16:6-12; these verses indicate the problem of workers coming to a place and tending to become set and settled down, not wanting to move; old relationships, old affections, old inclinations, and old concepts keep us from following the inner leading of the indwelling Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit forbade Paul and his co-workers, and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; the Holy Spirit's forbidding separates us, sanctifies us, and the Spirit of Jesus either allows us or does not allow us.
2. The Holy Spirit says "no" to sanctify us, and the Spirit of Jesus says "go" to send us out in the humanity of Jesus to accomplish the will of God under the cross.

- F. We must learn from the lesson of Paul to practice the Body life and to take the word of the Spirit through the members of the Body, obeying it as a word from the Head—20:23; 21:4, 7-8, 11-14.
- G. We must learn from the lesson of the mistake of James and the devastating mixture of the church in Jerusalem—vv. 18-26; Matt. 22:7; 24:1-2:
1. Jeremiah spoke of the law of life that could be written upon our hearts (Jer. 31:31-34), and Paul spoke of the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit (Rom. 8:2, 4, 6), but James treasured and uplifted the law of letters (Acts 21:20).
 2. Paul spoke of being crucified with Christ and being conformed to the death of Christ by the power of Christ's resurrection; it is this life that produces the Body life that consummates in the New Jerusalem—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10.
 3. In the light of the divine revelation, the greatest lack of James is the cross of Christ; self-cultivation does not carry out God's economy, but self-denial does.
 4. James boasted that there were thousands of believing Jews in the church in Jerusalem who were zealous for the law, but Paul was zealous to gain Christ, be found in Christ, know Christ, lay hold of Christ, pursue Christ, and uplift only Christ for the fullest enjoyment of Christ—Acts 21:20; Phil. 3:6-14; Col. 1:18b.
- H. We must learn from the lesson of Paul to be saved from the mixing of Judaic practices with God's New Testament economy, which is not only erroneous but also abominable in the eyes of God—Acts 21:18-27, 31, 36; Heb. 10:29.
- I. We must learn from the lesson of Paul's appealing to Caesar, utilizing his Roman citizenship to save himself from his persecutors so that he might fulfill the course of his ministry—Acts 22:25-29; 23:10-11; 25:8-12; 26:32:
1. Paul was willing to sacrifice his life for the Lord, but he still endeavored to live longer that he might carry out the Lord's ministry as much as possible—20:24.
 2. God in His sovereignty rescued Paul so that He might separate him from all the dangerous situations and entrapments and sent him to a quiet prison; this was to afford him a quiet environment and give him time, whether in Caesarea (24:27) or in Rome (28:16, 23, 30), so that through his last Epistles he might release exhaustively to the church throughout the generations the revelation of the mystery of God's New Testament economy that he received from the Lord.
 3. The benefit and profit that the church throughout the generations has received from these Epistles will take eternity to measure (see Acts 25:11, footnote 1).

IV. All of us should follow the pattern of the apostle Paul to do the same one work universally for the unique Body—1 Cor. 3:12; 15:58; 16:10; Eph. 4:11-16:

- A. The work in the Lord's recovery is for the building up of the local churches unto the building up of the universal Body of Christ—2:21-22; 1 Cor. 16:10.
- B. Today there are four kinds of workers:
1. The first kind is the co-workers who match the need of the ministry of God in the present age; this is a small group of people who have been dealt with by the Lord and who are in one accord.
 2. The second kind is the younger co-workers; they are willing to receive the direction and to come under the coordination of the older co-workers, and they are willing to follow and to

learn in humility.

3. The third kind is those who are unwilling to submit to the senior co-workers, who do not belong to the denominations, yet who are happy to remain in fellowship with us.
 4. The fourth kind is the preachers and free evangelists among the denominations.
- C. What we need today are the first and second kind of co-workers; concerning the third and fourth kind of co-workers, we can only let them choose their own pathway; with some people God has not assigned them to take the same way as we do, and we dare not say anything to them.
- D. Whatever the situation may be, we are here to do the work that God has committed to us; we cannot interfere with others' work, and we are not here tearing down others' work.

Message Seven

The Spirit of Jesus

Scripture Reading: Acts 16:6-7; Luke 1:35; Phil. 1:5, 27; 2:1-9

I. We may experience and enjoy the resurrected and ascended Christ as the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit—Acts 16:6-7.

II. We need to pay careful attention to two divine titles in Acts 16:6 and 7—the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus:

A. The interchangeable use of these two titles reveals that the Spirit of Jesus is the Holy Spirit.

B. The Holy Spirit is a general title of the Spirit of God in the New Testament:

1. The title the Holy Spirit is used for the first time at the conception of the Lord Jesus—Luke 1:15, 35:

a. It was when the time came to prepare the way for Christ's coming and to prepare a human body for Him to initiate the New Testament dispensation that the title the Holy Spirit came into use—v. 35; Matt. 1:18, 20.

b. In order to understand the first usage of the title the Holy Spirit, we need to see that this title is involved with the Lord's incarnation.

c. According to the principle of first mention, the Holy Spirit is related to Christ's incarnation and birth.

2. In the New Testament the title the Holy Spirit indicates that God is now mingling Himself with man—Luke 1:35.

C. The Spirit of Jesus is a particular expression concerning the Spirit of God and refers to the Spirit of the incarnated Savior who, as Jesus in His humanity, passed through human living and death on the cross—vv. 31, 35; Matt. 1:21; Acts 16:7:

1. In the Spirit of Jesus there is not only the divine element of God but also the human element of Jesus and the elements of His human living and His suffering of death as well.

2. The Spirit of Jesus is not only the Spirit of God with divinity in Him so that we may live the divine life but also the Spirit of the man Jesus with humanity in Him so that we may live a proper human life and endure its sufferings:

a. In his suffering Paul needed the Spirit of Jesus because in the Spirit of Jesus is the suffering element and the suffering strength to withstand persecution—Col. 1:24; Acts 9:15-16; 16:7.

b. In our preaching of the gospel today, we also need the Spirit of Jesus to face the opposition and persecution.

D. In Acts 16:7 Luke turns from the Holy Spirit to the Spirit of Jesus:

1. As a man, Jesus first lived a human life and then was crucified and resurrected—2:23-24, 32-33.

2. He ascended to the heavens and was made Lord and Christ—v. 36.

3. The Spirit of Jesus therefore implies the Lord's humanity, human living, death,

resurrection, and ascension—16:7.

4. The Spirit of Jesus involves more than the Holy Spirit does—vv. 6-7:

a. The Holy Spirit involves only the incarnation and birth of the Lord Jesus—Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18, 20.

b. The Spirit of Jesus involves His humanity, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension—Acts 1:1-3, 8; 2:23, 32, 36.

5. The Spirit of Jesus is the totality and the full realization of the all-inclusive Jesus—16:7.

E. Just as the Spirit of Christ is the reality of Christ, so the Spirit of Jesus is the reality of Jesus—Rom. 8:9; Acts 16:7:

1. If we do not have the Spirit of Jesus, Jesus will not be real to us.

2. Jesus is real to us because we have the Spirit of Jesus as the reality, the realization, of Jesus—v. 7.

III. The Spirit, who was not yet because Jesus had not yet been glorified in resurrection, is the Spirit with the humanity of Jesus; the Spirit today has been constituted with the glorified humanity of Jesus—Luke 24:26; John 7:37-39; Acts 16:7:

A. This Spirit, who is the living water that we drink and who is flowing out from within us, is constituted with the humanity of Jesus; without the humanity of Jesus, there could never be such a Spirit.

B. Without the human essence the Spirit of God could not be the flowing water of life; if God would be a flowing river of life, He must be constituted with the human nature of Jesus.

C. “There is now the Spirit of the glorified Jesus:...we have received Him to stream into us, to stream through us, and to stream forth from us in rivers of blessing” (Andrew Murray).

D. We need to experience and enjoy the Spirit of the humanity of Jesus for gospel preaching, for the church service, for our daily walk, and for the Lord’s recovery—Gal. 5:22-23; Phil. 2:15; 4:8.

IV. The move of the apostle Paul and his co-workers for the spread of the gospel was not according to their decision and preference or according to any schedule made by a human council but by the Spirit of Jesus—Acts 16:6-7:

A. Their work was by the Holy Spirit (v. 6), who was involved with the Lord’s incarnation and birth, and by the Spirit of Jesus (v. 7), who was involved with the Lord’s humanity, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension; the apostles were moving under the direction and guidance of such an all-inclusive Spirit.

B. The kind of work we do for the Lord depends on the kind of Spirit by whom we are guided, directed, instructed, and constituted:

1. As a vessel containing the Triune God, Paul was fully constituted with the Holy Spirit, who was involved with the Lord’s incarnation and birth, and with the Spirit of Jesus, who was involved with the Lord’s humanity, human living, all-inclusive death, life-imparting resurrection, and ascension—vv. 6-7.

2. Paul was a person constituted with this all-inclusive Spirit; thus, he could truly preach Jesus Christ—13:26-39; 17:18; 28:31.

3. If the Spirit becomes our constitution, then our work will be the expression of this Spirit, and we will do a work for Jesus as the incarnated One with humanity, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension.
4. If we are constituted with the Spirit of Jesus, we will do the work of ministering Jesus as the all-inclusive One and convey Him as such a One to others—9:20, 22; 17:18; 28:23, 31.

V. The Spirit of Jesus is clearly portrayed in the first two chapters of Philippians:

A. In Philippians 1 we have the preaching of the gospel (vv. 12-18); in order to preach the gospel, we need the Spirit of Jesus:

1. This chapter is concerned with the fellowship unto the gospel without envy or strife—vv. 5, 15, 17.
2. The life of Jesus as presented in the Gospels was a life without envy, strife, or rivalry; thus, the Spirit of Jesus does not have envy, strife, or rivalry.
3. We should preach the gospel in the Spirit of Jesus, without envy, strife, or rivalry.

B. Fellowship unto the gospel requires that we be in one spirit with one soul (v. 27):

1. If we are not in the Spirit of Jesus, we are not in the fellowship unto the gospel.
2. Only in the Spirit of Jesus is it possible for us to be in one spirit and with one soul.
3. To experience Christ we need to be in the fellowship unto the gospel by the Spirit of Jesus without envy, strife, or rivalry.

C. By the Spirit of Jesus we can take Christ as our pattern—2:1-9:

1. By the spirit of Jesus we can be as humble as Jesus was—vv. 5-7.
2. By the Spirit of Jesus we can fulfill the request of the apostle Paul and care for other saints—v. 3.
3. By the Spirit of Jesus we can think the one thing and have the same love—vv. 1-2.

Message Eight

The Development of the Kingdom of God

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:3, 8-9; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31

I. The Gospel of Luke is a narrative of the ministry of the incarnated Jesus as a record of the incarnated Jesus on earth; Acts is a record of the succeeding ministry of the resurrected and ascended Christ in heaven carried out through His believers on earth—1:8-9:

- A. In the Gospels the Lord's ministry on earth, carried out by Himself, was sowing Himself as the seed of the kingdom into His believers, with no church built up yet—Luke 8:4-15.
- B. In Acts the Lord's ministry in heaven, carried out through His believers in His resurrection and ascension, spreads Him as the development of the kingdom of God for the building up of the church throughout the entire world to constitute His Body, His fullness, to express Him, even the fullness of God for God's expression—1:8; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:23; 3:19.

II. The kingdom of God is the main subject of the apostles' preaching in Acts (8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31); this is indicated by the fact that the resurrected Christ, in His appearing to the apostles through a period of forty days, spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God (1:3):

- A. In the Gospels the Lord Jesus Himself had announced the gospel of the kingdom—Luke 4:43:
 - 1. The kingdom of God is the Savior as the seed of life sown into His believers, God's chosen people, and developing into a realm over which God can rule as His kingdom in His divine life—17:21; Mark 4:3, 26.
 - 2. The entrance into the kingdom of God is regeneration, and the development of the kingdom is the believers' growth in the divine life—John 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:3-11.
 - 3. The kingdom of God is the church life today, in which the faithful believers live, and it will develop into the coming kingdom as a reward to be inherited by the overcoming saints in the millennium—Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 20:4, 6.
 - 4. Eventually, the kingdom of God will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal kingdom of God, an eternal realm of the eternal blessing of God's eternal life, which all of God's redeemed will enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—21:1-4; 22:1-5, 14.
 - 5. The kingdom of God is what the Savior announced as the gospel, the good news, to those who were alienated from the life of God—Eph. 4:18.
 - 6. The Lord's word in Luke 17:20-21 indicates that the kingdom of God is not material but spiritual; it is the Savior in His first coming (vv. 21-22), in His second coming (vv. 23-30), in the rapture of His overcoming believers (vv. 31-36), and in His destroying of the Antichrist (v. 37) to recover the whole earth for His reign there (Rev. 11:15).
 - 7. The kingdom of God is the Savior Himself, who was in the midst of the Pharisees but who is now within the believers—Luke 17:21; 2 Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:27:

- a. Wherever the Savior is, there the kingdom of God is; the kingdom of God is with Him, and He brings it to His disciples—Luke 4:43; 17:21.
 - b. Christ is the seed of the kingdom of God to be sown into God's chosen people to develop into God's ruling realm—8:5, 10.
 - c. Since His resurrection He has been within His believers; hence, the kingdom of God is within the church—John 14:20; Rom. 8:10; 14:17.
- B. In Acts 1:3 the Lord Jesus as the One in resurrection must have helped the disciples to have such a proper realization concerning the kingdom of God:
- 1. The disciples must have begun to see that the kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life in the believers, that it is the propagation of Christ as life in His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life—John 3:3, 5.
 - 2. The disciples certainly must have understood that they were now part of the propagation, the spreading, of Christ, and thereby were part of the kingdom of God—Acts 1:8-9; 8:12; 20:25; 28:23, 31.

III. The kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life into His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life—2 Pet. 1:3-11:

- A. To enter into this kingdom, people need to repent of their sins and believe in the gospel so that their sins may be forgiven and so that they may be regenerated by God to have the divine life, which matches the divine nature of this kingdom—Mark 1:15; John 3:3, 5.
- B. All the believers in Christ can share the kingdom in the church age for their enjoyment of God in His righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit—Rom. 14:17.
- C. The kingdom of God will become the kingdom of Christ and of God for the overcoming believers to inherit and enjoy in the coming kingdom age so that they may reign with Christ for a thousand years—1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 20:4, 6.
- D. As the eternal kingdom, the kingdom of God will be an eternal blessing of God's eternal life for all of God's redeemed to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—21:1-4; 22:1-5, 14, 17.

IV. The churches and the kingdom of God go together; the churches produced by the propagation of the resurrected Christ are the kingdom of God on earth today—Acts 14:22; 20:25:

- A. The resurrected Christ, who is propagating Himself in His ascension, by the Spirit, and through the disciples, is the reality of the kingdom of God; the kingdom of God is His expansion—1:8; 8:12:
 - 1. The churches are the expansion of Christ, who came to sow Himself as the seed of the kingdom of God; this is revealed in the Gospels—Mark 4:3, 26.
 - 2. In the Gospels Christ was the seed of the kingdom; in the book of Acts we have the propagation of this seed to produce the churches as the kingdom of God—8:1, 12; 13:1-4.
- B. We in the churches are the propagation of Christ and the expansion of Christ, and we are enlarging the kingdom of God—Rev. 1:9, 11.

V. In Acts 14:22 Paul entreated the believers who were continuing in the faith to realize that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God,

because the whole world opposes our entering in; to enter into the kingdom of God is to enter into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom.

VI. In Acts 19 we see that Satan is fighting against God's spreading of His kingdom on earth; the prevailing ministry for the propagation of Christ is a fighting, a battle, for God's kingdom—vv. 9, 23-41.

VII. Paul's proclaiming the kingdom of God in 28:31 was the propagation of the resurrected, ascended, and all-inclusive Christ—vv. 23, 31:

A. This is proved by the words teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, which things go together with the kingdom of God—v. 23.

B. To teach concerning Christ is to spread the kingdom of God; therefore, the kingdom of God is actually the propagation of the resurrected Christ—a process that continues to be carried out through the believers today—v. 31.

Message Nine

The Divine Commission according to the Heavenly Vision for the Continuation of the Book of Acts in the Unique Flow of the Divine Stream

Scripture Reading: Acts 26:18; Psa. 46:4a; Rev. 22:1; 1 Cor. 16:10

- I. In the Scriptures the concept of the divine stream, the unique flow, is crucial—
Gen. 2:10-14; Psa. 46:4a; John 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1:**
- A. The Bible reveals the flowing Triune God—the Father as the fountain of life, the Son as the spring of life, and the Spirit as the river of life—Jer. 2:13; Psa. 36:9a; John 4:14; 7:37-39.
 - B. The source of the flow is the throne of God and of the Lamb—Rev. 22:1.
 - C. In the Scriptures there is only one flow, one divine stream (Gen. 2:10-14; Rev. 22:1); since there is only one divine stream and since the flow is uniquely one, we need to keep ourselves in this one flow.
 - D. The divine stream, the unique flow, is the stream of the Lord's work—1 Cor. 16:10:
 - 1. There is a stream, which we may call the stream, the current, of the work; where the stream flows, there is the work of God.
 - 2. The book of Acts reveals that in the move of the Lord there is only one stream, and we need to keep ourselves in this one stream—cf. 15:35-41.
 - 3. The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this day, is just one stream.
 - 4. The history of the church shows that throughout the generations there has been one stream of the Spirit flowing all the time; many have been working for the Lord, but not all have been in the flowing of that one stream.
- II. The Lord appeared to Paul to bring him into the stream of the Lord's work, making him a minister and a witness both of the things in which Paul had seen Him and of the things in which He would appear to Paul—26:16; cf. 1:8; 23:11; 20:20, 31:**
- A. Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision of man as a vessel to contain, be filled with, and express the processed and consummated Triune God, of Christ as the mystery of God, and of the church as the Body of Christ, the mystery of Christ—26:19; 9:4-5, 15; Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:6-7; Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4; 5:32.
 - B. Once you have seen a vision of God's plan and have been converted from everything to Christ Himself, there will be something within you energizing you to carry out God's plan; this vision will become your burden as you live and labor in the continuation of the book of Acts—Gal. 1:15-16; Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 15:10.
- III. Acts 26:18 reveals the work that we must do today for the increase and building up of the Body of Christ in the continuation of the book of Acts; this verse unveils the all-inclusive contents of our divine commission:**

- A. This is to carry out the fulfillment of God’s jubilee, the acceptable year of the Lord, proclaimed by the Lord Jesus in Luke 4:18-21 according to God’s New Testament economy.
- B. We need to pray over the contents of our divine commission in Acts 26:18, asking the Lord to make them our experience and reality so that we can bring others into this experience and reality—Eph. 3:8:
 1. “To open their eyes”:
 - a. We need to continually pray for a spirit of wisdom and revelation to understand and to see more and more of Christ, the Body of Christ, and the divine dispensing for the divine economy—1:17; 3:5; cf. Rev. 4:6; 3:17; Matt. 6:6.
 - b. We cannot go on without new knowledge of the Lord and a new vision of Him—Acts 26:16; Phil. 3:8b, 10a, 13; cf. Deut. 4:25.
 - c. Being a minister and a witness is not a matter of teaching and knowledge but of appearing and vision; the things in which we have seen the Lord and the things in which the Lord will appear to us are the things that we must minister to others—Acts 22:14-15.
 - d. Our commission is to “enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is”—Eph. 3:9.
 2. “To turn them from darkness to light”:
 - a. Light is the presence of God—Isa. 2:5; 1 John 1:5.
 - b. We need to be people who are full of light—Luke 11:34-36.
 - c. The enjoyment of Christ as our God-given portion is “in the light”—Col. 1:12; John 8:12; 1:4; Psa. 119:105, 130; Matt. 5:14; Rev. 1:20.
 - d. We need to be luminaries in the world, holding forth the word of life—Phil. 2:14-16.
 - e. We need to tell out the virtues of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light—1 Pet. 2:9.
 3. “To turn them...from the authority of Satan to God”:
 - a. The highest point in our spiritual experience is to have a clear sky with the throne above it—Ezek. 1:22, 26:
 - 1) To have the throne above a clear sky is to give the Lord the preeminence in our being and the highest and most prominent position in our life—Col. 1:18; cf. Ezek. 14:3.
 - 2) The clearer our sky is, the more we are under the throne, under God’s authority—Acts 24:16.
 - 3) For God to have the throne in us means that He has the position to reign in us—cf. Rom. 5:17.
 - 4) If we are under a clear sky with the throne above it, genuine authority will be with us to bring others under God’s authority—2 Cor. 10:4-5, 8; 13:3, 10.
 - b. Our uttermost love for the Lord qualifies, perfects, and equips us to speak for the Lord with His authority—cf. John 21:15, 17.
 4. “That they may receive forgiveness of sins”:
 - a. We need to go to the Lord to receive a thorough forgiveness of all our sins—1 John 1:7, 9.
 - b. David begged God to blot out his transgressions, wash him thoroughly from his iniquity,

cleanse him from his sin, and purge his sin with hyssop—Psa. 51:1-2, 7, 9:

- 1) Hyssop typifies Christ in His humble and humiliated human nature (1 Kings 4:33a; Exo. 12:22a), implying Christ as our Mediator and sacrifice (Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 10:9).
 - 2) Like David, we need to stay in the presence of God to have a thorough and genuine repentance and confession to receive a full forgiveness from God.
 - 3) If we confess our sins to receive God's forgiveness, we will have the gladness of God's salvation and be sustained with a willing spirit; then we can teach transgressors His ways, and sinners will turn back to Him—Psa. 51:12-13.
5. "That they may receive...an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me":
- a. This inheritance is the Triune God Himself with all He has, all He has done, and all He will do for His redeemed people.
 - b. The Triune God is embodied in the all-inclusive Christ, who is the portion allotted to the saints as their inheritance—Col. 2:9; 1:12.
 - c. We enjoy the pneumatic Christ as the pledge of our inheritance (Eph. 1:14) "among those," that is, in the church life—cf. 2 Tim. 2:22.
 - d. We need to bring people into the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ in the church life so that they may enjoy Christ as we do and be sanctified dispositionally with the holy nature of God through the exercise of their spirit—Heb. 2:10-11; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 4:13.

IV. If we would be in the continuation of the book of Acts, we need to continue to live in the divine history by having an upper-room consecration—1:13-14:

- A. At the seashore Peter gave up his job to follow the Lord Jesus, but in the upper room he gave up much more—Matt. 4:18-20; Acts 1:13-14:
 1. He stood with the heavenly vision to give up the religion of his forefathers.
 2. He gave up his country, his relationship with his neighbors and friends, and his relatives, and he was willing to risk his life.
- B. The kind of consecration that we need today is an upper-room consecration, a consecration in which we pay the price to have our whole being "married" to the heavenly vision—26:19; 1:8; 20:24.
- C. If we pay the price for the heavenly vision, we will "burn the bridges behind us" and will have no way to go backward.
- D. Whether we have seen the heavenly vision or not depends on whether we are willing to pay the price to buy the anointing Spirit as the eyesalve—Rev. 3:18.
- E. To take the way of the Lord's recovery is not cheap; this way is expensive and requires a costly consecration.
- F. We are not here for a movement but for the Lord's recovery, and the recovery can be carried out only by the specific and extraordinary consecration in the upper room.
- G. The one hundred twenty in the upper room all became a burnt offering; they were burning for the Lord in spirit, and they burned others with the divine fire of the divine life—Luke 12:49-50; Acts 2:3-4; Rom. 12:11.
- H. When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, great crowds followed Him, but they did not afford Him anything for His move; His move was with those in the upper room, with those whose eyes

had been opened and whose hearts had been touched—Acts 17:6b.

- I. It is a small number who will turn the world and change the age; if we would be in the upper room, we need to pray in a specific way and say, “Lord, I am willing to be in the upper room for the recovery of Your testimony.”